



**Title of the presentation:** At the End of the Rainbow: Nikkei Endeavors in Hawai'i

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### Short biography

Alina-Elena Anton specialises in American and Canadian cultural studies, with a particular focus on Japanese American and Japanese Canadian identity. Her research interests also include issues of otherness, transborderness and transculturality, contemporary Japanese literature in an international context, myth, memory and remembering, and more recently mystery and detective fiction. After obtaining her PhD in 2014, she came to Japan on a MEXT scholarship to conduct postdoctoral research on returnee Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians at Kyoto University's Institute for Humanities. She is the author of several academic papers on Asian American topics, such as "The loved one is always the other" (*Romanian Journal of Artistic Creativity*, 2013) and "The country I had thought was my home': David Mura's *Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansei*" (*Zinbun: Annals of the Institute for Research in Humanities*, 2016).

### Abstract

On the island of Kauai, in 1835, a young man from Boston, William Hooper, visited a small sugar mill. Determined to advance the "progress of civilization," Hooper had been sent to the tropical island by a Honolulu mercantile firm financed by New England businessmen, with the mission of establishing the first sugar plantation in Hawaii. Very much a man of his time, Hooper was also in true alignment with Euro-American efforts to colonize the islands and bring the modern industrial order of productivity to the Pacific frontier. Fueled by an impulse to progress enshrined as *necessity*, expansionist America was decided not to let the land "lie in waste." Crucial in this exploitation was the entry of "strangers from a different shore"—from China, Japan, as well as Korea, the Philippines and India. Encouraged by word of mouth stories about opportunities in Hawaii, immigrants from Japan ventured to the islands most often as contract laborers and "picture brides," chasing hopes of economic betterment and the promise of "sweet" success. The presentation traces the historical efforts of Japanese Issei immigrants and their Nisei descendants to make a home and embed themselves in the Hawai'ian milieu as presented in Kazuo Miyamoto's book *Hawaii, End of the Rainbow* (1964). Using the concepts of *necessity* and *extravagance*, the discussion analyzes the way in which Miyamoto, a Hawaiian-born Nisei doctor and author, depicts "from the inside" important historical experiences of Japanese immigrants, from the difficulty of *hole hole* field work and grueling labor in plantation mills, to the dream of returning home and the challenge of rebuilding shattered lives after the conclusion of World War II. The relevance of Miyamoto's book lies in its bridging the story of Japanese Americans before and during the war, to encompass the "whole unhappy story."