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An Award of Distinction

Suma Ikeuchi, an assistant professor in UC Santa Barbara's Department of East Asian Languages and Cultural Studies (EALCS), has been awarded the Francis K. Hsu Prize for the best book in the anthropology of East Asia by the American Anthropological Association's Society of East Asian Anthropology.

Her book, "Jesus Loves Japan: Return Migration and Global Pentecostalism in a Brazilian Diaspora" (Stanford University Press, 2019), explores the lives of Japanese Brazilians who convert to Pentecostalism after returning to their ancestral homeland.

The award is the first given to a UCSB faculty member.

"I was overjoyed to hear that my book won the Hsu Award from the Society of East Asian Anthropology," Ikeuchi said. "Like many people, I've felt more isolated this year, so this news was a welcome reminder that I am still part of the vibrant community of scholars and readers fascinated by this dynamic world region, East Asia. I especially want to thank the people who shared their time and stories with me, the Japanese Brazilian migrants in Toyota, Japan, and look forward to revisiting them again with the book for more dialogues once I can travel again."

Fabio Rambelli, professor of religious studies, interim chair of EALCS and International Shinto Foundation Chair in Shinto Studies, said the award was a well-deserved acknowledgment of Ikeuchi's first-rate scholarship.

"The Department of East Asian Languages and Cultural Studies is enormously proud of this accomplishment by one of its faculty members; it is a very meaningful prize,

one of the most important in the field of anthropology of East Asia,” he said. “This prestigious achievement is a further indication of the vitality and creativity of the research being carried out by my colleagues, which places our department among the top in the nation for the quality and originality of its research output.”

The award is named for the late Francis L.K. Hsu (1909-2000), renowned cross-cultural anthropologist and former president (1977-78) of the American Anthropological Association.

Roughly 190,000 Nikkeis (Japanese Brazilians) have migrated to Japan after the introduction of the country’s “long-term resident” visa. The Nikkeis, however, often don’t feel at home in their supposed ethnic homeland. Many, in turn, convert to Pentecostalism, which has seen explosive growth in Latin America since the 1970s.

In “Jesus Loves Japan,” Ikeuchi explores how Christianity appeals to Nikkeis as a “third culture” that transcends ethno-national boundaries and offers a way out of a reality marked by stagnant national indifference.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.