

Book Workshop

Governing Lives Across the Middle East and Its Diasporas: Religion, Mobility, and Everyday Politics

Date: Monday, June 29, 2026

Time: 15:00–18:30 JST / 07:00–10:30 BST

Venue: Seminar Room 301, Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa
(ILCAA), Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Address: 3-11-1 Asahi-cho, Fuchu, Tokyo 183-0003, Japan

Language: English

Registration Form: <https://forms.gle/xh8armcsk21EBgLy5>

Please register by June 28, 2026, 10:00 AM JST.

Workshop Outline

This workshop brings together three ongoing book projects that examine how religion, ethnicity, displacement, mobility, and transnational politics shape experiences of boundary-making, belonging, and everyday life across the contemporary Middle East and its diasporas. Designed as an intensive, discussion-focused event, it invites participants to engage with draft chapters, discuss core arguments, and reflect on the theoretical and methodological contributions of each manuscript.

Mashuq Kurt's book, *The Lost Crescent: Neo-Ottomanism, Diaspora Governance, and the Transnational Politics of Religion*, examines Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) as a transnational religious infrastructure linking Turkey to Muslim communities across Europe and North America, showing how sermons, religious education, and institutional practices become sites where state power, diasporic belonging, and host-state anxieties are negotiated.

Barış Oktem's book, *Between Screens and States: Digital Habitus and Colonial Power in Refugee Lives*, follows Syrian refugees—Arab and Kurdish—along the Turkey–Greece–Germany corridor and into Berlin and London, exploring how smartphones, digital platforms, and bureaucratic interfaces shape a distinct “digital habitus” and new forms of colonial power in contemporary migration governance.

Mostafa Khalili's book, *Everyday Ethnicity and the Nationalist Politics of Kurmanji-Speaking Kurds in Iran*, returns to rural and urban settings in and around Urmia in northwest Iran, examining when and how Kurdishness becomes salient in everyday life and how securitisation, cross-border ties, economic transformations, and inter-ethnic relations produce multiple and shifting forms of belonging.

Read together, the three projects move across different scales and sites—from local borderlands and everyday social relations to transnational religious networks and global digital infrastructures. Despite their distinct empirical focuses, they share a concern with how boundaries are produced, negotiated, and contested in everyday life. Together they ask how political, religious, ethnic, legal, and digital forms of boundary-making shape experiences of mobility, recognition, and belonging, and how individuals and communities navigate, rework, or circumvent these structures in pursuit of more liveable futures.

Program

Time	Session
15:00–15:10	Opening Remarks and Introduction
15:10–15:40	Book Presentation I: <i>The Lost Crescent: Neo-Ottomanism, Diaspora Governance, and the Transnational Politics of Religion</i> – Mashuq Kurt (Royal Holloway, University of London)
15:40–16:00	Comments and Discussion
16:00–16:30	Book Presentation II: <i>Between Screens and States: Digital Habitus and Colonial Power in Refugee Lives</i> – Barış Oktem (Keio University)
16:30–16:50	Comments and Discussion
16:50–17:00	Break

17:00–17:30	Book Presentation III: <i>Everyday Ethnicity and the Nationalist Politics of Kurmanji-Speaking Kurds in Iran</i> – Mostafa Khalili (ILCAA, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)
17:30–17:50	Comments and Discussion
17:50–18:30	Roundtable Discussion: Borders, Diasporas, Digital Spaces, and Everyday Politics in the Middle East

Discussants

- Prof. Yasuyuki Matsunaga (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)
- Dr. Marouf Cabi (London School of Economics and Political Science)
- Prof. Keiko Sakai (Chiba University)

Organizers

- TUFUS-ILCAA Core Project (History / Area Studies) “Field Archiving of Memory: Dynamics of Cooperation in Muslim Society”;
- TUFUS-ILCAA Joint Research Project “Everyday Forms of Ethnicity and Religiosity in Kurdistan: Comparative Inquiries into Social Organization of Cultural Difference and Crossborder Interaction in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey”

Co-organizer

- JSPS Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (A): Sense of Nation and Knowledge Production among the migrant communities from the Middle East (24H00136)

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