



Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA)
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

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International Workshop

Kurdish Borders and Boundaries in Motion

Date: Thursday, July 2, 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/47ugC5858TyycHBM8>

Please register by July 1, 2026, 10:00 AM JST.

Workshop Outline

Kurdistan is often portrayed as a homeland fragmented by state borders and divided among multiple political jurisdictions. Yet borders do not merely separate. They also connect. Across the Kurdish regions of Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria, as well as within the diaspora, social, religious, economic, and political ties continue to traverse and reshape the boundaries that seek to contain them. Far from being peripheral spaces located at the margins of states, borders have become central arenas through which identities, communities, mobilities, and forms of belonging are negotiated and reproduced.

This workshop brings together scholars working on different parts of Kurdistan to explore how borders and boundaries are made, contested, crossed, and transformed in everyday life. Moving beyond conventional understandings of borders as fixed lines of division, the workshop examines the multiple ways in which Kurdish actors navigate fragmented political landscapes while sustaining various forms of connectivity across state frontiers. Particular attention will be given to the intersections of political borders, religious networks, ethnic boundaries, mobility, memory, and everyday practices of cross-border interaction.

The workshop builds on the ongoing ILCAA Joint Research Project, *Everyday Forms of Ethnicity and Religiosity in Kurdistan: Comparative Inquiries into Social Organization of Cultural Difference and Cross-Border Interaction in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey* (Project ID: jrp000305), while serving as a platform for developing new collaborative research initiatives. It also constitutes a preliminary step toward a proposed special issue for the *Journal of Borderlands Studies* under the working title *Borders and Boundaries in Kurdistan in Motion*.

The first part of the workshop consists of three paper presentations addressing distinct yet interconnected dimensions of Kurdish borderlands, ranging from theoretical engagements with borderlands studies and critical geography to the role of religious networks and transnational mobilities in challenging, sustaining, and reconfiguring political boundaries. The second part brings the members of project and special issue contributors together in a closed planning session to discuss future collaboration.

Program

Time	Session
15:00–15:10	Opening remarks and introduction
15:10–15:35	Paper I: <i>Critical Geography and Borderlands Studies: An Alternative Framework for Studying Kurdistan?</i> – Yasuyuki Matsunaga (TUFS)
15:35–15:50	Comments and discussion
15:50–16:15	Paper II: <i>When Borders Are Not Margins but the Heart of the Homeland: Division, Connectivity, and the Making of Kurdistan as a Multi-Layered Suturescape</i> – Mostafa Khalili (ILCAA- TUFS)
16:15–16:30	Comments and discussion
16:30–16:40	Break
16:40–17:05	Paper III: <i>The Unmaking of Political Borders in Kurdistan: Sufi Genealogies, Mobilisation, and the Khaznawi Tariqa across the Turkish–Syrian Frontier</i> – Mashuq Kurt (Royal Holloway, University of London)
17:05–17:20	Comments and discussion
17:20–17:30	Break
17:30–18:30	(Closed Session for project members) Discussion of the proposed special issue, collaborative framework, and future activities.

Organizers:

- TUFS-ILCAA Core Project (History / Area Studies) “Field Archiving of Memory: Dynamics of Cooperation in Muslim Society”;
- TUFS-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”



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Co-organizer

- JSPS Fund for the Promotion of Joint International Research (Fostering Joint International Research), “Across Borders, Between Boundaries: The Ambivalent Nationhood of Transnational Minorities” (25KK0018)

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