

Iran Through a Peripheral Lens: The Politics of Belonging

Call for Contributions | Hybrid Workshop

December 7–8, 2026 • 14:00–19:00 JST ([see the time in your time zone](#))

ILCAA, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Abstract Deadline: 25 October 2026

We invite contributions to a small workshop on the politics of belonging in modern Iran, organized jointly by the [UCLA Asia Pacific Center](#) and [the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa \(ILCAA\)](#) at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. The workshop brings together researchers from various fields working on local and regional histories and contemporary social life in Iran to ask how people understand, use, and contest ethnic, religious, and national categories in particular settings.

We are interested in how residents, political actors, and institutions draw distinctions among people, when these distinctions organize social relations, and when other affiliations take precedence. Ethnic categories may have long histories in a place, yet their boundaries, meanings, and political salience remain questions for investigation rather than imputation. Contributions should attend to the relationship between public claims about collective belonging and the practices through which people conduct their lives.

We seek studies that may locate relations within a wider field of local hierarchies, neighboring populations, and ties across borders. How do people invoke Iranian belonging in local disputes? Under what conditions do linguistic, geographic, ethnic, or religious differences become grounds for solidarity, competition, or exclusion? How do distinctions within a population affect claims made in its name, and how do those claims change between everyday encounters and moments of political mobilization? Contributions might follow language use in a mixed city, religious practices that bring several forms of belonging together, electoral alliances, or changes in identification accompanying migration and urban settlement. We also welcome studies of regional categories (such as *jonubi* or *shomali*), asking whom such terms include and how their meanings vary. Historical work can trace the formation and transformation of these distinctions through changes in landholding, labor, education, or local elite governance. Across these settings, the aim is to understand how ethnic boundaries intersect with class, gender, kinship, and other social relations.

We welcome historically informed ethnographic and qualitative research, archival studies, and work drawing on digital or diaspora settings with clear connections to the places under study.

Early-career researchers and doctoral students are encouraged to contribute. Proposals should identify a concrete research setting, the evidence on which the contribution draws, and the questions it will bring to the workshop.

Submission Requirements: A provisional title; an abstract of up to 500 words identifying the concrete research setting, the sources or evidence on which the contribution draws, and the questions it will bring to the workshop; a short biographical note of up to 100 words; and an indication of whether you would participate in person in Tokyo or online.

Submit your proposal: Please complete the [online application form](#) by **October 25, 2026**. Applicants will be informed of the outcome by **November 2, 2026**.

Participants will circulate papers or research briefs in advance for sustained discussion. The meeting will also consider a shared research agenda and possibilities for collective publication.

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