

**The Politics of Categories:  
Rethinking Boundaries in Translation**

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This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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## Abstract

An increasing number of works argues that the state boundary is no longer just a territorial line to mark the outer edges of the state but it has become more diffused in terms of its locations and its forms. Bordering practices take place not just at the geographical entry and exit points of the state but in cyberspace and are performed not simply by immigration officers but also, for instance, by civilian vigilante groups. While the extant works successfully address the complexity of bordering practices and suggest the need to think of the boundary differently from a simple line, it has yet to effectively propose an apposite image of the boundary. This lack of investigation leaves the extant works unresponsive to their own reliance on the image of the boundary-as-a-line in articulating alternative images.

The thesis examines this tenacious image of a line in order to investigate an image of the boundary which might productively reflect its diffused characteristics. Considering that bordering is an act of classifying people into groups, the thesis takes categorisation as a focal point of investigation. This enables the thesis to point out that the tenacity of the boundary-as-a-line image is manifested in the continual reliance on categories in the extant debates. Drawing on the examples of migrant activism where categories play significant roles, the thesis argues that categories are used as representational tools in activism. As such, categorisation entails the possibility of failing to represent to perfection. The thesis argues that the reliance on categories is realised in this representational slippage, the gap between what categories are supposed to signify and what is actually signified by categories.

The thesis concludes by suggesting that these two – the ability and inability of categorisation – point to the image of the boundary as a dot. The reliance on categories, and hence the tenacity of the boundary-as-line image appears in the gap between what a line attempts to do and what it fails to do.

# Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	iii
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	ix
<b>Abbreviations</b>	x
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Contested Images of Boundaries.....	1
Reading the Images of Boundaries in the State Language.....	10
Proposing the Image of the Boundary as a Dot.....	16
A Note on Structure and Terminology.....	20
<b>Chapter 1. The Politics of Categories in Migration.....</b>	<b>24</b>
Introduction.....	24
Category-Vocabularies as the State Language.....	28
The Politics of Categories.....	40
Categories of Citizen and Foreigner.....	43
Reading Immigration Policies in Japan through Categories.....	49
Chapter Conclusions.....	58
<b>Chapter 2. Reading Boundaries through Category Politics.....</b>	<b>62</b>
Introduction.....	62

Border-Migration Scholarship.....	64
Problematising Categories: Categories as Control.....	74
Theorising Categories through Agamben.....	81
Challenging Categories.....	88
Theorising Categories through Rancière.....	96
Strength and Weakness of BM scholarship.....	101
Implications of Using Japanese Examples in BM Scholarship.....	107
Chapter Conclusions.....	110

### **Chapter 3. Producing Categories for Hidden Purposes.....114**

Introduction.....	114
The Language of the State as a Marker of Linguistic Boundary..	118
Making Citizens and Foreigners:	
The Annual Meeting with Government Officials.....	129
<u>Background Information on the Meeting</u> .....	129
<u>Making Foreigners</u> .....	134
<u>Making Citizens</u> .....	138
<u>The Puzzle</u> .....	142
Pretending to be Foreigners: The KCU's A Day of Action.....	144
<u>Background Information on the KCU and A Day of Action</u> .....	145
<u>To Appeal to the Japanese Public</u> .....	148
<u>To Exhibit Enthusiasm</u> .....	154
Chapter Conclusions.....	163

<b>Chapter 4. Producing Categories for Resistance.....</b>	<b>167</b>
Introduction.....	167
Challenging the Category of Foreigner.....	171
<u>Background information on the Nambu FWC.....</u>	171
<u>Challenging Speechlessness with the Idea of Democracy.....</u>	174
Production of Categories by Social Order and	
Linguistic Boundaries.....	181
Making Citizens?.....	187
<u>Producing the Category of Foreigner.....</u>	187
<u>The Excess within the Category of Citizen.....</u>	191
Chapter Conclusions.....	199
 <b>Chapter 5. Producing Categories for Convenience.....</b>	 <b>202</b>
Introduction.....	202
The China Japan Volunteer Association.....	204
<u>Background Information on the CJVA.....</u>	204
<u>Representing Citizens and Foreigners.....</u>	207
<u>Hiding the Intervention of the CJVA.....</u>	214
Immigration Lawyers.....	217
<u>Background Information on Immigration Lawyers.....</u>	217
<u>Representing Citizens.....</u>	218
<u>Hiding the Intervention of Lawyers.....</u>	222
Interpreters.....	225
<u>Background Information on Interpreters.....</u>	225
<u>Making Citizens and Foreigners by Manipulation.....</u>	227

<u>Making Citizens and Foreigners by Hiding the</u>	
<u>Intervention of Interpreters.....</u>	234
Chapter Conclusions.....	236
<b>Chapter 6. Boundary as a Dot.....</b>	<b>240</b>
Introduction.....	240
Tenacity of Boundary Realised in the	
Representational Slippage.....	243
<u>Category Politics between the Pedagogical and the Performative.....</u>	243
<u>Categories as the Signifier.....</u>	246
<u>Categories as the Signified.....</u>	249
Theorising the Representational Slippage.....	254
<u>Badiou and BM Scholarship.....</u>	254
<u>Representation as the Signifying Mechanism.....</u>	258
<u>The Void as the Slippage of Representation.....</u>	262
Boundary as a Dot and its Implications for Resistance.....	267
Boundary as a Dot and its Implications for Community.....	277
Chapter Conclusions.....	284
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>288</b>
Introduction.....	288
Translation between Intellectual Boundary	
and Territorial Boundary.....	291
Translation between Boundaries and Categories.....	292

Translation between Languages and Categories.....	296
Translation between Categories as the Signifier and the Signified.....	299
Translation between Japanese Examples and BM Scholarship....	302
Reflections on Limitations, Contributions and Areas of Further Research.....	306
<b>Appendix A: List of Selected Interviews.....</b>	<b>314</b>
<b>Appendix B: List of Selected Events Observed.....</b>	<b>317</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>318</b>
<b>Selected Bibliography on Japanese Immigration.....</b>	<b>343</b>



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## Abbreviations

ALTs	Assistant Language Teachers
APFS	Asian People's Friendship Society
CJVA	China Japan Volunteer Association
FWBZ	Foreign Workers Branch of Zentouitsu
GU	General Union
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
JITCO	Japan International Training Cooperation Organization
KCU	Kanagawa City Union
MHLW	Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare
MITI	Ministry of International Trade and Industry
MOC	Ministry of Construction
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOL	Ministry of Labour (changed to MHLW since 2001)
Nambu	Zenkoku Ippan Labour Union Tokyo Nambu
Nambu FWC	Nambu Foreign Workers Caucus
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NPO	Nonprofit Organization
NSK	<i>Nihonseiko</i>
PNB	Philippine National Bank
SEI	Syndicat des Employés de l'Institut franco-japonais
SMJ	Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan
SPR	Special Permanent Resident
Tozen	Zenkoku Ippan Tokyo General Union
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees