

Chapter 3

Producing Categories for Hidden Purposes

Introduction

I began the thesis by identifying current debates on boundaries as a challenge to the long-held image of state boundaries as lined markers of the territorial edge. The debates showed diffused bordering practices in terms of places, performances and perspectives, opening avenues to probe the concept of boundary. However, I argued that they have yet to examine directly how the boundary might look like if it is no longer a line. Such examination is an urgent task, given that the extant debates paradoxically remain dependent upon the image of the boundary as a line. Therefore the main aim of the thesis is to investigate the image of the boundary which underlines the diffused bordering practices discussed in the current literature. In order to do so, I took a cue from Walker and suggested the borderline as a starting point. As Walker persistently warns, the borderline is tenacious, both territorially and intellectually: any attempts to go beyond the line necessarily derive from the very boundary that such attempts try to escape. Therefore, I proposed that it might be possible to interrogate the image of the boundary by critically engaging with what the boundary-as-a-line does, that is, categorisation.

In chapter 1, I explored the roles of categories to clarify what the thesis does by analysing state boundaries from the perspective of categories. Although this exploration was made in a preliminary fashion, it pointed to two potential central roles of categories. Categories are first and foremost the

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language of the state, to name the movement of people and to make the movement visible and intelligible to the state. Secondly, categories become a site where people are implicated in naming practices. By using category-vocabularies, people participate in the parts played by the language of the state in producing specific subjects to manage mobility. The identification of these two roles of categories suggests that the focus on categories necessarily entails an interrogation of the politics of categories: an investigation of political significance of category-vocabularies and a critical reflection on the ways in which they are used by people.

Chapter 2 advanced the preliminary observations on category-vocabularies by reviewing an array of scholarship which implicitly and explicitly interrogates categories in contexts where state boundaries no longer reside at the edges of territories. Calling this group of works border-migration (BM) scholarship, I argued that BM scholarship addresses two aspects of the politics of categories. Firstly, it unravels how people are implicated in the production of category-vocabularies which control subjects. Secondly, BM scholarship expatiates on the ways in which people resist such control by naming and categorisation. From here, I further investigated each approach by reading respectively Agamben's and Rancière's works as theorising the role of categories. I argued that BM scholarship exhibits its strength to investigate the production of subjects out of the uncertainty of social order, which both Agamben and Rancière point out. The examination on BM scholarship also revealed its weakness whereby category-vocabularies are almost exclusively understood in relation to control and resistance.

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Consequently, the scholarship fails to address the contradictory phenomenon that the language of the state, that is category-vocabularies, is utilised to resist control imposed by the very same language. This persistent reliance on categories derives from contexts where bordering practices no longer sustain the image of the boundary as a line. What then is the implication of the persistence of categories to the image of the boundary?

This is an important question which animates the design and scope of the subsequent three chapters. In chapters 3, 4 and 5, I will address the persistent reliance on category-vocabularies for further investigation arising from the general examination of the politics of categories in chapters 1 and 2. While BM scholarship introduces various instances where categories are replaced by other categories in resisting the previous ones, it does not reflect on the implications of such appearance and re-appearance of category-vocabularies. Therefore, by using migrant activism in Japan as an example, the next three chapters will closely investigate the ways in which the participants in activism rely on category-vocabularies in articulating their demands and organising their activities. As the subsequent chapters will show, the categories of citizen and foreigner are exclusively used in migrant worker activism I observed and participated in. Therefore, the key questions animating the next three chapters are: In what contexts do people resort to categories of citizen and foreigner? What are the differences and commonalities among various instances where these category-vocabularies are utilised in activism? The aim of these chapters is to examine a range of examples where category-vocabularies are used in activism and to investigate

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the implications of the tenacity of category-vocabularies for the politics of categories.

In order to address these questions effectively, I will begin by exploring one key theme, linguistic difference, which is common in my analysis of migrant activism in Japan. Migrant activism in Japan is organised by people with various ethnic backgrounds who do not share the same mother tongue. As chapters 3, 4 and 5 will show in depth, when people use categories of citizen and foreigner, these categories are produced *alongside* linguistic differences between Japanese and other languages. I will argue that language fluidity adds an important element to the language of the state: categories of citizen and foreigner are linked with the question of whether one speaks Japanese or not. This highlights a critical aspect of categories, namely their ability to produce specific subjects called citizens and foreigners through emphasising the linguistic boundary between them. I will argue that categories classify people as citizens and foreigners by drawing linguistic boundaries between them, through which people are made into ‘foreigners’ and ‘citizens’. The key text used in this section is Gloria Anzaldúa whose idea of border language elucidates how territorial boundaries of inside and outside are drawn onto linguistic boundaries.

Having identified the critical role of linguistic boundaries in producing category-vocabularies, I will move on to focus on two instances that demonstrate how the connection between linguistic boundaries and category-vocabularies rings true in migrant activism in Japan. These events are the annual negotiation meeting with government representatives and a

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well-known union activity of the Kanagawa City Union (KCU) called ‘A Day of Action’.

I will argue that, with varying degrees, each event used category-vocabularies to realise two different aims. Firstly, the participants were separated between citizens and foreigners in order to appeal to the ‘Japanese’ society. Secondly, people were content with being identified either as citizens or foreigners in order to further their goal of having their own labour disputes solved. These two purposes are played out in categorising people alongside linguistic differences. The participants tried to achieve the first aim by identifying some as citizens and others as foreigners, which regulated agencies of the participants in activism. Crucially, hovering in the background was a performance where people tried to achieve their second aim by *pretending* that what they are corresponded with the category assigned to them. Linguistic boundaries were actively drawn by the participants to simultaneously achieve these two aims. It is in this intersection between performing the category and producing it through linguistic boundaries that people engage in politics of categories.

The Language of the State as a Marker of Linguistic Boundary

Although migrant workers constitute only 1.4 percent of the total workforce of Japan,¹ they have not been inactive as organisers of social movements in Japan. Ranging from those in manual labour to foreign language instructors, from people with a status to irregular migrants,

¹ Ministry of Justice. (2011) *Part 1: Immigration Control in Recent Years* (in Japanese), <<http://www.moj.go.jp/content/000081958.pdf>> [Accessed 6 July 2012].

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migrant workers have sought ways to improve their working conditions.² Some language instructors have joined the Nambu labour union, starting from the first migrant workers' branch in the union, Sony Language Labs, established in 1973. This was developed into a group called Nambu Foreign Workers Caucus (Nambu FWC) mainly composed of migrant workers from the USA and Canada. In 1990, six Filipinos working in Atlas Japan created a union branch to demand that the management should fulfil contracts, pay for overtime work and stop using female workers for the night shift.³ The KCU began to conduct labour consultations with migrant workers in 1991. The majority of KCU members were originally irregular migrants from Korea, but by the time of writing the majority were migrant workers, both 'legal' and 'illegal', mainly from South America, including Peru and Brazil. Similarly, 80 percent of the General Union's (GU) members are migrant workers, the majority of them from Europe including the UK and others from Latin America, most notably Brazil. 3 out of 5 union organisers at the GU are

² Apart from labour-related issues, people organise activism on issues such as the detention of foreign nationals, education of children with foreign national parents, and the regularisation of people without status. For example, a wide range of hunger strikes frequently take place in detention centres across Japan to protest the practice of detention itself as well as to demand improved conditions within detention centres (interview with a member of WITH, 26 May 2010). Since 1999, the Asian People's Friendship Society (APFS) has regularly organised actions where non-status people collectively turn themselves in to the Ministry of Justice to demand the granting of legal status. Some nikkei Brazilians set up an organisation to assist children with foreign parent(s) who have difficulty at school (Interview with Kaneshiro, 24 May 2010). For examples of these activities, see the websites of Provisional Release Association in Japan (PRAJ), APFS and *Burajiru tomo no kai* [Associação Amigos do Brasil], listed in the bibliography section.

³ See Watanabe, Ben. (1990) 'Tsuini Kessei sareta Gaikokujin Roudousha Rousou' [Migrant Workers Finally Organised a Labour Union], *Roudou Keizai Junpo [10 Days Report on Labour and Economy]*, No.1412, pp.9-12; Watanabe, Ben. (1990) 'Atorasu Japan no Roushi Funsou, Zenmen Kaiketsu' [The Final Settlement of Labour Disputes at Atlas Japan], *Roudou Keizai Junpo [10 Days Report on Labour and Economy]*, No. 1414, pp.13-16.

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migrant workers themselves.⁴ Labour unions such as Zentouitsu set up a branch called the Foreign Workers Branch of Zentouitsu (FWBZ) in 1992, where irregular migrants and trainees and interns, many of them from China and Bangladesh, come to join.⁵ In 2002, Tin Win Akbar, a Burmese refugee, established the Federation of Burmese Citizens of Workers Union (FBCWU) which became a hub of Burmese, both 'regular' and irregular migrants, and an arena not only for solving labour disputes but for sending political messages on Burma.⁶ Wu Xiao Liang, a Chinese labour union organiser, began a labour union called *Kakoukai* (Chinese Labour Union) in 2003 for migrant workers from China, including trainees and interns.⁷

A brief glance at these examples elucidates one salient feature of migrant activism in Japan: it is organised by people with various national backgrounds including China, Brazil, Peru, the USA, the Philippines, Burma and Japan. The two different instances which I will look at in this chapter are not an exception. The annual talk with government representatives was organised primarily by three labour unions, each of which consists of people from different places including the USA, Peru, Brazil, China and Japan. The KCU union's well-known activity, A Day of Action, was comprised of people

⁴ Interview with Smith, a union member from the GU, 21 June 2010. The name has been changed.

⁵ Torii, Ippei. (2010) 'Aru Kojin Kamei Rouso no 30 nen' [30 years of an Individual-based Labour Union], *Roudou Houritsu Junpo [10 Days Report on Labour Law]*, No.1722, p.48.

⁶ Interview with Tin Win Akbar, 19 June 2010. See also Ishizaki, Naoichi, and Masatoshi Yorimitsu. (2004) 'Nihon ni okeru Roudoukumiai no Gaikokujin Roudousha ni taisuru Shienkatsudou to Soshiki ka' [Activities of Japanese Trade Unions to Support and Organize Foreign Workers in Japan], Hitotsubashi University Repository, pp.1-24
<<http://cis.ier.hit-u.ac.jp/Japanese/publication/cis/dp2003/dp211/text.pdf>> [Accessed 1 June 2009].

⁷ Interview with Wu Xiao Liang, 19 April 2010.

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from Japan, Brazil and Peru. Not only do they speak different languages, but they also have varying levels of linguistic competency in languages other than their own.⁸ As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, this linguistic difference greatly shapes the ways in which categories of citizen and foreigner are used in activism in Japan. Given this importance, the present section fleshes out the connection between category-vocabularies and languages (as tongues). In order to do so, it draws on Gloria Anzaldúa's work on border languages that explores this connection.

By focusing on languages spoken at the frontier, Anzaldúa argues that languages, as 'tongues' such as 'mother' tongues and 'foreign' tongues, function as a partitioning device to draw a territorial boundary. They border people according to borderlines and put them into categories readable to state languages. Hence, language is border language. She explores the idea of border tongue/border language through the example of her own tongue, Chicana/Chicano, the language spoken by people who neither belong to America nor Mexico. Chicana represents a group of people whose ancestors are a mix of Spanish conquistadors, Indian (native Americans), and a mixture of these two groups, *mestizo*. Based on her experience growing up in the US-Mexico border as a Chicana, Anzaldúa vividly illustrates how Chicana tongue is tamed and domesticated by both standard English and standard Spanish. As Anzaldúa argues, which language one speaks is a device to

⁸ Regarding the varying degrees of Japanese language competency, see Ikegami, Shigehiro. (2002) 'Chiiki Shakai no Henyou to Esunishiti' [Transformation of Local Community and its ethnicity], in Kajita Takamichi and Takashi Miyajima (eds.) *Kokusai ka Suru Nihon Shakai [Internationalization of Japanese Society]* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2002), pp.156-158, p.160.

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translate oneself in relation to categories intelligible to the state, for instance, Americans or Mexicans. Anzaldúa argues that she is rendered 'illegitimate' because she speaks languages which do not fit into a world divided by territorial boundaries of the state:

Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself. Until I can accept legitimate Chicano Texas Spanish, Tex-Mex and all the other languages I speak, I cannot accept the legitimacy of myself. Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate.⁹

In this way, languages, as tongues, play a critical part in classifying people into category-vocabularies, for example, categories of citizens and foreigners in the case of migrant activism in Japan.

Furthermore, Anzaldúa problematises the category of Chicana/Chicano itself to argue that this is just another name, a category, which is invented to make unnameable people into nameable and visible to a world which is divided into territorial boundaries. As she argues below, it is only when an unnameable group of people was named and recognised as 'Chicanos', that

⁹ Anzaldúa, Gloria. (1987) *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books), p.59.

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they *became a people* with a name intelligible to the state and with a language representing them.

Chicanos did not know we were a people until 1965 when Ceasar Chavez and the farmworkers united and *I am Joaquín* was published and *la Raza Unida* party was formed in Texas. With that recognition, *we became a distinct people*. Something momentous happened to the Chicano soul — *we became aware of our reality and acquired a name and a language* (Chicano Spanish) that reflected that reality. Now that we had a name, some of the fragmented pieces began to fall together — who we were, what we were, how we had evolved. We began to get glimpses of what we might eventually become.¹⁰

Since categories are produced to translate, in a figurative sense, what one is in relation to state boundaries, languages which are assigned by these categories translate the ‘location’ of what one is into the vocabularies available to the state. Languages we speak are marked with territorial boundaries that identify which categories we belong to and, hence, which language we are supposed to speak as our own. In this way, categories use languages to trap us into a world composed of neat lines, eliminating the possibilities of creating a world out of the unnameable.

So don't give me your tenets and your laws. Don't give me your lukewarm gods. What I want is an accounting with

¹⁰ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, p.63. Emphasis mine.

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all three cultures—white, Mexican, Indian. I want the freedom to carve and chisel *my own* face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion *my own* gods out of *my* entrails. And if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim *my* space, making a new culture—una cultura mestiza—with *my own* lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture.¹¹

Importantly, Anzaldúa argues that this interconnection between languages, as tongues, and the language of the state, as category-vocabularies, produces specific subjects. As the previous two chapters have demonstrated, category-vocabularies assign specific subjects depending on the names given to people. For example, being categorised as a refugee eclipses one's agency and produces a subservient and helpless subject. Being categorised as an illegal immigrant makes one invisible and silenced. As chapter 2 showed, in BM scholarship, this type of production of subjects is reflective of the first approach to categories: categories as controlling subjects. By showing that the subjects are produced by the connection between languages and category-vocabularies, Anzaldúa argues that languages play a cardinal role in regulating what we are. Chicanas internalise the 'illegitimacy' placed upon them because of the name and language assigned to them.

Chicanas who grew up speaking Chicano Spanish have *internalized the belief that we speak poor Spanish. It is illegitimate, a bastard language.* And because we internalize how our language has been used against us by

¹¹ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, p.22. Emphasis mine.

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the dominant culture, we use our language differences against each other. [...] *To be close to another Chicana is like looking into the mirror. We are afraid what we'll see there. Pena. Shame. Low estimation of self.* [...] We oppress each other trying to out-Chicano each other, vying to be the 'real' Chicanas, to speak like Chicanos.¹²

However, for Anzaldúa, the connection between tongues and category-vocabularies also produces subjects which might resist control imposed by state boundaries. This resonates with the second approach to categories taken by BM scholarship which I argued in the previous chapter: categories as resistance to control imposed by borderlines.

As a *mestiza* I have no country, my homeland cast me out; *yet all countries are mine* because I am every woman's sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races). I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective/religious male-derived belief of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; *yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture*, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet. *Soy un amasamiento, I am an act of kneading*, of uniting and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also *a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them*

¹² Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, p.58. Emphasis mine.

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*new meanings.*¹³

Thus, Anzaldúa makes a pithy observation that the language of the state, in other words category-vocabularies, is interconnected with languages, as tongues. Categories, such as citizens and foreigners not only make subjects legible to the state via vocabularies available to the state, but also make subjects legible via languages which represent the borderlines. Not one or the other but both are operational when specific subjects are produced by the language of the state. Politics of categories are not just about the ways in which people engage in the parts played by category-vocabularies but also about the ways in which people utilise their tongues in engaging in such politics.

This is a critical point to make in analysing migrant activism in Japan because as this chapter as well as chapters 4 and 5 will demonstrate, every time when people were identified as either citizens or foreigners, Japanese language and foreign languages appeared in specific ways to produce and sustain these categories. Linguistic boundaries were coupled with the production of categories of citizen and foreigner. Since the production of categories of citizen and foreigner was to assign specific subjects to those identified with these categories, the linguistic boundary was entangled with this process. Considering that the linguistic boundary permeates into the process of subject formation, it might be helpful to have a brief reflection here on what kinds of subjects the categories of citizen and foreigner produce

¹³ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, p.80-81. Emphasis mine.

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before jumping into the analysis of migrant worker activism in Japan.

When explaining the difference of foreigners from citizens, Rousseau argues: 'Speech distinguishes man among the animals; language distinguishes nations from each other; one does not know where a man comes from until he has spoken'.¹⁴ Though it may be somewhat unintentional, by equating human/animal to citizen/foreigner, he suggests the voicelessness attached to the space outside the political community. Coming from 'foreign' countries with 'foreign' languages, 'foreigners' can be instantly relegated to the status of animals and excluded from the domain of speech exclusively associated with humans. By using slightly different words, Hannah Arendt similarly argues that the loss of status in the political community of the state indicates 'the loss of the relevance of speech...the loss of all human relationship, the loss, in other words, of some of the most essential characteristics of human life'.¹⁵ Although Arendt makes this observation in regards to stateless people, her remarks resonate with Rousseau's to indicate the citizens' monopoly over politics. The domain of politics is exclusively associated with the domain of political community of the state; if one loses the citizenship status within the system of the state, one just as well loses the ability to have one's voice taken politically.

By using the annual meeting with the government as an example, I will show in this chapter how Rousseau's and Arendt's observations ring true in some contexts of migrant workers in Japan. Identifying some as citizens and

¹⁴ Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 'Discourse on the Origin of Inequality', in *The Basic Political Writings*, trans. and ed. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett), p.44.

¹⁵ Arendt, Hannah. (1968) *Imperialism: Part II of the Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harvest), p.177.

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others as foreigners is to assign political status to the former and strip away the status of being political from the latter. Once categorised as foreigners, they are made invisible and excluded from the discussion held with government representatives. Meanwhile, some identified as citizens monopolise the domain of speech, dominating the discussion at the meeting. Not given a chance to talk, the people identified as foreigners become helpless subjects who passively wait for the citizens to solve their problems for them. As I will argue, their silent presence watching over the negotiation with the government also increases the authority of the citizens who are representing the otherwise voiceless foreigners. The voice of foreigners was spoken through citizens, suggesting the monopoly of speech, and the monopoly of politics, by the latter.

This chapter will also demonstrate that to draw a boundary over the domain of politics is to draw a linguistic boundary as well. People who monopolised the domain of politics were those who spoke Japanese. Not being able to speak Japanese made some into foreigners and took their voices away from them. This is the observation which Anzaldúa made, and the observation which rings true to both of the examples I will look at in this chapter: the government talk and the KCU activities.

The difference between these two examples is that, while the former, the government talk, will pose a puzzle on categories, the latter, the KCU activities, gave a chance to explore some answers to this puzzle. As I will hint at the end of my analysis of the government talk, there was something else going on other than the observations made by Rousseau and Arendt about

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categories and speech. However, what this ‘something else’ was remained unclear, a puzzle, until I started examining the KCU activities. I will clarify what this ‘puzzle’ was in my analysis of the KCU activities. As I will argue at the end of my analysis of the KCU activities, understanding this ‘puzzle’ was crucial to highlighting one important implication of the politics of categories: people pretend to be foreigners by playing the speechless roles assigned to them.

Therefore, the main purpose of the subsequent two sections is to demonstrate how Rousseau’s and Arendt’s observations on speech and citizenship ring true, and how their observations intersect with Anzaldúa’s observation on languages (as tongues) and citizenship: the production of categories of citizen and foreigner is drawing a boundary over who can speak and who cannot, alongside the linguistic boundaries between them. Each example, the government talk and the KCU activities, will be discussed in the subsequent sections respectively. Each section will first provide background information on the event and activity. The section on the government talk will then explain how citizens and foreigners are made in the meeting, while the section on the KCU activities explains how two different purposes of the events shaped the categories of citizens and foreigners.

Making Citizens and Foreigners: The Annual Meeting with Government Officials

Background Information on the Meeting

On March 8 2010, a group of labour unions and NGOs gathered in the

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House of Representatives in Kasumigaseki, Tokyo, to attend the annual negotiation meeting with government officials. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss a wide range of issues concerning foreigners living in Japan. It is a full-day event, and in 2010, it began at 9 am and finished at 5 pm. This discussion with the government was one of a series of events organised annually specifically for migrant workers during the period of the Spring Offensive (*shunto*).¹⁶ The Spring Offensive for migrant workers began in 1993, facilitated by several labour unions including the Zentouitsu, the Nambu and the KCU.¹⁷ Various activities take place every spring during the Spring Offensive period, and the meeting with the government representatives was one of them.¹⁸

The event was a rare face-to-face occasion where NGOs and labour unions were able to talk to bureaucrats from different ministries. The Zentouitsu, the Nambu, the KCU, the Tokyo Occupational Health and Safety Centre (TOHSC) and the Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan (SMJ)

¹⁶ The Spring Offensive, a labour union practice unique to Japanese labour unions, was originally initiated by General Council of Japan Trade Unions [*Nihon Roudou Kumiai Souhyougikai*] in 1955 with the aim of coordinating the actions of labour unions across different corporations to simultaneously make their demands. In Japan, labour unions are organised primarily based on corporations, which further creates a network of unions based on industries. This method of creating unions based on companies is considered as weakening the power of workers because each union has its own agenda and requires less cooperation among workers. The Spring Offensive was designed to increase cooperation among labour unions.

¹⁷ Torii, Ippei. Torii, Ippei. (2004) '*Zentouitsu Gaikokujin Roudousha Bunkai no Ayumi to Genjou*' [Zentouitsu Foreign Workers Caucus: its history and present situation], in Hiroshi Komai (eds) *Imin wo Meguru Jichitai no Seisaku to Shakai Undou* [Local Government Policies and Social Movements about Migrants] (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten), pp.273-301. See also Torii, Ippei. (2012) 'Hataraku Nakama, Iju Roudousha' [Migrant Workers are Colleagues at Work], *Roudou no Kagaku* [Science of Labour], Vol.67, No.5, p.25.

¹⁸ Torii, '*Zentouitsu Gaikokujin Roudousha Bunkai no Ayumi to Genjou*'. Other events held include demonstrations such as a 'March in March', a 'Day for Migrant Workers' and a '*Shunto* Solidarity Day' as well as collective bargaining between union members and the management.

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attended from the side of NGOs and labour unions.¹⁹ From the ministry side the participants included the Japan Pension Service, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport and Tourism (MLIT), and the National Police Agency.

The impressive list of representatives from the side of the government directly reflects the range of topics discussed at the meeting. In 2010, the meeting was divided into three sessions. Labour-related demands were discussed in the morning, including contractual outsourcing and social benefits for language instructors. The afternoon began with a discussion of detention issues and the domicile registration of foreign nationals. The last session focused on the training and internship system.

For some ministries, the annual meeting with the labour unions and NGOs seemed to be regarded as an important meeting, while for others it seemed to carry little weight. Some bureaucrats attending the meeting looked quite senior, and they exchanged informal greetings with some members of the NGOs and labour unions during the meeting. Since they had attended the event for several years, they seemed to remember them and had come to know them.²⁰ For these ministries, the talk might have been considered as a useful

¹⁹ The SMJ functions as the hub of a number of NGOs working on issues ranging from asylum applications and the detention of refugees to education and labour-related issues of foreign residents.

²⁰ During the discussion, some activists called their names and vice versa and acknowledged that they had met in previous years.

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chance to obtain hands-on information from the NGOs and labour unions and modify their policies to accommodate the reality on the ground. Meanwhile, some bureaucrats seemed quite junior, perhaps fresh from university, judging by their appearance. I suspected that talking with the NGOs and labour unions may have carried little weight with these ministries, which consequently sent junior bureaucrats to the meeting. It seems that, by sending some young officials to the meeting, these ministries tried to say that they were not neglecting the voice of the people and were 'doing something' about the issues of migrants in Japan.

For the NGOs and labour unions, however, the meeting was an important event to convey their concerns directly to the government representatives and report situations happening on the ground. Indeed, the annual meeting with the government did have a history of producing tangible results. For instance, as a result of having talks on the salary forms of migrant workers for several years with the National Tax Agency, the Agency eventually created a new form so that migrant workers could claim a tax reduction from their salary.²¹

In order to make the best out of the meeting, the NGOs and labour unions sent union organisers and NGO staff who were long-term activists. Some of them had worked on immigration issues for many years; some for more than 30 years.²² During the talk, they nudged the bureaucrats to take

²¹ Torii, '*Zentouitsu Gaikokujin Roudousha Bunkai no Ayumi to Genjou*', p.288. Notes from my interpretation of the interview held between the secretary general of Zentouitsu and a researcher, 14 April 2010. The interview was also attended by a union organiser from Nambu and an intern from Zentouitsu.

²² The representatives from the NGOs and labour unions are usually secretaries-general and chairmen/chairwomen of these organisations. Most of them

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some actions, accused them of inaction and demanded that they explain in detail the rationales for particular policies. These activists talked persuasively, providing concrete examples based on experiences on the ground. Sometimes they skilfully praised the government officials, while severely chastising them at other times. Faced by these tactful negotiations, some young bureaucrats became tongue-tied and seemed frightened to speak. Having seen other bureaucrats reprimanded for their inadvertently casual comments, it was not difficult to guess that their remarks, too, could be instantly used by the activists to criticise the government.

For the participants from the NGOs and labour unions, therefore, the meeting was a vital chance to create an arena in which people identify themselves as members of civil society through democratic actions. As some point out, the concept of democracy is the essence of civil society.²³ The idea of democracy guarantees the space where ‘rational dialogue, consensus, persuasion, individual autonomy, personal responsibility, mutual obligation, and tolerance’ are made possible.²⁴ With a chance to have a dialogue with government representatives, the people attending the event made sure that the talk became an occasion where democratic interaction took place between members of civil society and bureaucrats. People at the discussion table and participants in the event engaged in, and were given a chance to engage in, a dialogue with bureaucrats and through dialogue they attempted to create a

have worked in the field for at least 10 years.

²³ See, for instance, Alexander, Jeffrey C. (2006) *The Civil Sphere* (New York: Oxford University Press); Moulin, Carolina, and Peter Nyers. (2007) “We Live in a Country of UNCHR” Refugee Protest and Global Political Society’, *International Political Sociology*, Vo.1, No.4, pp.356-372.

²⁴ Moulin and Nyers, “We Live in a Country of UNCHR” Refugee Protest and Global Political Society’, p.358.

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consensus on the situation of migrant workers.

Making Foreigners

When I attended the event in 2008 and 2010, the room was packed with about 50-60 people. The fact that an interpretation desk was set up in the corner of the room and translated documents were handed to participants suggested that many people attending the meeting were foreign nationals.²⁵ The majority of them were people from Latin America, including Brazil and Peru, and were members of the KCU. The participants also included about 10-15 people from the FWBZ. A handful of people were from the Nambu FWC.

Despite the number of migrant workers attending the meeting, the silence on their part was quite palpable. In 2008 when I attended the meeting for the first time, I was surprised to see how little migrant workers spoke during the meeting. On one rare occasion, a Chinese worker working as a trainee at a strawberry farm shared his working conditions in detail in Chinese, using an interpreter.²⁶

The silence on the part of migrants could be also seen in the arrangement of the meeting room, particularly in the way seats at the negotiation table were allocated. Inside the meeting room, one desk was set

²⁵ It is difficult to tell by appearance who are foreigners and who are Japanese. Many people from Latin American come to Japan as Long-Term Residents and Spouses or Children of Japanese, and these visa statuses are given to *nikkeijin* (foreign-born Japanese) and their descendents. Similarly, it is quite difficult to tell the difference between Chinese/Koreans and Japanese. I only guessed which ones must be foreign nationals based on several clues. Firstly, the organisers prepared ear-phones for migrant workers to listen to the simultaneous interpretation. Secondly, some interpreters sat next to a group of migrant workers to provide whispering interpretation. Thirdly, when the participants had lunch at the cafeteria, they sat as a group depending on the organisations to which they belonged.

²⁶ Notes from my attendance at the government talk, March 2008.

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up at the front. The bureaucrats sat here facing toward the room, while the NGOs and labour unions sat on the opposite side. The table was set up so that at least 10 people could sit on each side. The interpretation desk was set up at the front corner of the room. The representatives from the government side came and went, depending on whether or not the topics of each session were relevant to their ministries. During the meeting, several ministries were present at the negotiating table. Some ministries sent one bureaucrat, while others sent three to four representatives. The same was true of the NGO and labour union side. Depending on the topics discussed, the representatives of relevant NGOs and labour unions joined the negotiation table. During each session, the table was fully occupied by participants from both sides. During the 8-hour-meeting, the floor was opened every now and then by the chairperson so that the people sitting behind the discussion table could provide additional information and put forward demands not mentioned at the table. In 2010, only two people briefly joined the negotiating table where they discussed the issue with the ministry representatives. These two people were union organisers from the Nambu and the GU, and when they joined the discussion table, they expressed, in Japanese, their concerns and made suggestions. Otherwise no migrant workers sat at the discussion table.

Having attended the government talk for several years, Tsukamoto, a union activist who also works as a Japanese-Spanish interpreter at the meeting, argues that the silence of migrant workers at the meeting was even expected by some Japanese activists.²⁷ Tsukamoto points to the sloppy

²⁷ Interview with Tsukamoto, 15 March 2010. The name has been changed.

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preparations for translation. Who checks the accuracy of the translated materials? How do we know that the interpretation is correct? Who interprets in place of the interpreters when there is only one Japanese-Spanish interpreter and that person needs a break? She suggests that, if the occasion was truly open for migrant workers, the NGOs and labour unions should make sure that migrant workers could understand and follow the discussion through the translation services. After all, the event has been taking place for more than 20 years, and the preparation of such a service should have been well arranged by now. After the event, Tsukamoto was once stopped at the train station by a migrant worker from the KCU who had attended the event. He asked her, ‘What was the place that we were at today?’²⁸ Tsukamoto was shocked to hear this because nobody had explained to him what the meeting was about (and hence why they went to the building of House of Representatives), even though he and other migrant workers had spent their whole day there.

In 2010, when I attended the meeting as a Japanese-English interpreter, I also noticed that the translated documents did not fully cover the topics discussed. Three sets of documents, one set for each session, were prepared in Japanese.²⁹ The materials handed out in the first session on labour-related

²⁸ Email correspondence with Tsukamoto, 9 March 2010. The original text was: ‘Ima ita tokoro wa douiu basho desuka?’ My translation.

²⁹Seikatsu to Kenri no tame no Gaikokujin Roudousha Soukoudou Jikkou Iinkai [Committee for Life and Rights of Migrant Workers] and the Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan (2010) *‘Roudou Mondai ni Kansuru Youseisho’ [Labor Related Demands]* (in Japanese and English); *‘Kenshu · Ginoujishu Seido ni Kansuru Youseisho’ [Trainees/Interns Related Demands]*(in Chinese, Japanese and Spanish); “Shutunyukoku Kanri” oyobi “Gaikokujin Jumin Daicho ni Kansuru Youseisho” [“Immigration Control” and “Resident Registration System for Foreign Residents” Related Demands](in Japanese), handout at the negotiation with the government

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issues were only translated into English. Spanish and Chinese translations were given only for the last session on trainees and interns. Considering that some labour-related issues directly affected people from Latin America, it did not seem to make much sense that a Spanish translation was not provided during the first session, but only for the last session. For instance, parts of the demands on the labour-related issues read as follows: ‘Many foreign workers, especially most of the workers from Latin America, work at factories on electricity, cars and food. Their employment style is contractual’.³⁰ Although some issues in the first session clearly affected the migrant workers of the KCU, they were not provided with translated documents. Furthermore, no documents were translated for the second session on immigration policies.

The fact that the negotiation with the government was conducted in a way that excluded people who could not speak Japanese suggests that Japanese speakers *emerged as* ‘Japanese citizens’ while others *became* ‘foreigners’ who do not belong to Japan. People are divided between Japanese citizens and foreigners through an exclusionary language practice, that is, making Japanese as the dominant language and excluding other languages at the meeting. The talk with the government became a space where the presence of citizens was created and made visible, while some people were classified as foreigners who could not use Japanese and were thus not able to join the discussion. The participants in the event were all members of NGOs and labour unions, and as such, were supposed to be members of civil society.

(English and Japanese), 8 March 2010.

³⁰ The document written in Japanese and handed at the meeting titled ‘Roudou mondai ni kansuru youseisho’ [Labor Related Demands], p.3.

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However, some were categorised as citizens and invited to participate in civil society, while others were classified as foreigners and excluded from it. By excluding languages other than Japanese throughout the negotiation, the event became a space which divided Japanese and foreigners.

Making Citizens

The sheer silence on the part of people not speaking Japanese was in stark contrast to the heated atmosphere generated by others in the meeting. The people sitting at the negotiating table sometimes used strong language in Japanese to criticise the government, supported by occasional jeering and booing in Japanese from the people sitting behind the table. The meeting was supposed to be a chance for participants to create a democratic space through dialogue with the government. However, this chance was given only to people who were able to speak Japanese, which separated some as ‘Japanese citizens’ and others as ‘foreigners’ without command of Japanese.

Importantly, the presence of ‘Japanese’ citizens was also fortified by making other participants as foreigners and assigning a speechless status to them. The mere collective presence of silent people filled the room, corroborating the authority of Japanese citizens as *representatives* of foreigners who were unable to join the discussion. Having a translation booth at the meeting and handing out translated documents were quiet, yet noticeable, indications of the presence of migrant workers in the room. Most of them said nothing, and could probably say nothing, but merely faced the bureaucrats from behind the people at the negotiating table. A rare report

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provided by a migrant worker through interpretation was used as a testimony to justify the demands of the Japanese activists.

It is not hard to imagine that the accounts and demands presented by the people sitting at the negotiation table would have become less convincing in an empty room with no ‘foreigners’ present at all. As Shipper argues, having a large presence of migrants gives Japanese labour unions and NGOs ‘greater moral authority’.³¹ One example Shipper draws on is the Asian People’s Friendship Society (APFS), which is an organisation that demands the legalisation of people without status. Its strategy is that irregular migrants appear collectively in front of the Ministry of Justice and voluntarily hand themselves in to argue that they have come to prove that they have lived in Japan for a long time, as members of local community, and are therefore entitled to amnesty. ‘Undoubtedly, bringing twenty-one overstayed foreigners to the Immigration Office in Tokyo to petition for their amnesty, together with five APFS lawyers, provides more leverage than would a sole petitioner’.³² In this respect, having these ‘foreigners’ on the side of the ‘Japanese’ activists gave weight to their remarks. While some people assume the role of citizens, who monitor government policies and have a dialogue with the government, the presence of foreigners is used to provide silent authorisation, which acknowledges citizens as their representatives who negotiate with the government on their behalf. In this way, the collective presence identified as foreigners enables some people to become active as

³¹ Shipper, Apichai. (2008) *Fighting for Foreigners: Immigration and its Impact on Japanese Democracy* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press) *Fighting for Foreigners*, p.108.

³² Shipper, *Fighting for Foreigners*, p.108.

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citizens. They become people called citizens representing people called foreigners.

Separating Japanese citizens from foreigners in civil society reflects the exclusionary trait of civil society where the Japanese became visible in leading debates and strategising the direction of the movements.³³ For instance, Lisa Go's observation highlights this. Go works as a missionary to support Filipino women in Japan, especially those called *japayuki* who work in the sex industry. She argues that, although foreigners and Japanese are both there to work together, only Japanese citizens lead the movements. Meanwhile, foreigners are only regarded through their role of providing stories of their experience, which strengthens the image of them as victims and fortifies the image of Japanese citizens as helpers.³⁴ Go reflects on her experience as follows:

At that time, I was asked to attend various meetings organised by the NGOs, church-related organisations and women's organisations. I was given a role to explain the situations of Filipino women in Japan, and to teach Japanese men and women about themselves [about the *japayuki* issues created and perpetuated by the Japanese people themselves]. My energy was sucked up in having to explain the same things over and over again, and I began

³³ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. (2003) "Seiji Shakai" wo Saisouzou Suru' [Reimagining 'Political Society'], *Rekishigaku Kenkyu [Journal of Historical Studies]*, No.781, pp.2-15; Myonsu Kim and Tadashi Inazuki. (2000) *Zainichi Kankokujin no Shakai Ido [Social Movements of Korean Residents in Japan]* in Kenji Kousaka (ed.) *Kaisou Shakai kara Atarashii Shimin Shakai he [From a society based on class to a new society based on civil society]* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press), pp.181-200.

³⁴ Go, Liza, and Jung, Yeong-hae. *Watashi toiu Tabi [Travelling 'T']* (Tokyo: Seido-sha), p.30, p.315.

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to realise that this was because people simply regarded me as *a representative [of Filipino women], someone who could provide testimonies* of Filipino women. I even began to think that Japanese people simply wanted to *peep into the secret of Filipino women* by extracting information about *japayuki* from me.[...] The kind of feelings I had then cannot be fully described in words.³⁵

Go's arguments highlight the experience of the migrant workers who attended the meeting with the government. By excluding foreign languages from the negotiation, only people who spoke Japanese were invited to join the discussion and were included in the realm of civil society. When migrant workers were allowed to sit at the discussion table, they used Japanese. This suggested that Japanese was the language exclusively used for discussion and, if one would like to join discussion with the government representatives, one had to be able to speak Japanese. On the rare occasions that migrant workers spoke from the back of the room, they merely provided testimonies of their own accounts. Since the discussion was not entirely translated, migrant workers were not given full accounts of the topics discussed. Sometimes they were not even informed about what the meeting was about. In this way, a democratic space of rational discussion—where the idea of civil society is

³⁵ My translation. Go and Jung. *Watashi toiu Tabi*, pp.30-31. Emphasis mine. Yamamoto further argues that this relationship between foreigners providing testimonies and citizens developing strategies based on those testimonies can also be seen in the translation arrangements at the meeting. Although many migrants attended the aforementioned meeting which Go attended, hardly any interpretation services were arranged. Yamamoto, Kaoruko. (2004) 'Gaikokujin Roudousha "Mondai" to Nihonjin' ["Problems" of Foreign Workers and Japanese], in Hiroshi Komai (eds.) *Imin wo Meguru Jichitai no Seisaku to Shakai Undou [Local Government Policies and Social Movements about Migrants]* (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten), pp.303-323.

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supposed to be exercised—was created in a way that excluded some people as foreigners and included others as ‘Japanese citizens’ eligible to join the discussion.

In this way, the negotiation with the government highlights the tenacity of categories of citizen and foreigner. By excluding foreign languages from the meeting, some participants were identified as citizens and exclusively invited to exercise the democratic nature of civil society. Meanwhile, others were identified as foreigners and excluded from the democratic space because they could not fully follow the discussion and thus could not participate in it. The latter became silent while the former became more and more animated during the discussion. Furthermore, the silence of people identified as foreigners produced the category of citizens who speak on behalf of foreigners. Their mere presence produced the authority of those who spoke as citizens. Their silent and excluded presence and their occasional testimonies were required to authorise the representative roles enjoyed by citizens. In a way, as Go describes, the existence of people categorised as foreigners was ‘sucked up’ by the group of people called ‘citizens’, so that the latter could exercise their presence as citizens in a supposedly democratic space.

The Puzzle

While the dominance of Japanese citizens suggests the creation of categories of citizen and foreigner in migrant worker activism, some fragments of scenes I saw at the meeting seemed to be escaping from this analysis. When I was sitting at the translation table, which enabled me to

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observe people at the negotiating table as well as those sitting behind it, I noticed that some migrant workers were dozing off in the middle of the heated discussion. Were they just tired? Or did they not care about the meeting? Were they bored because they could not follow the discussion fully due to insufficient translation? If the translation was insufficient, why did they not make sure that they were fully informed about the contents of the discussion? If migrant workers were interested in the meeting and wanted to follow the discussion, they could have requested proper translation services to be provided at the meeting.

As chapter 4 will show, and as the aforementioned Go's case showed, some migrant workers do question the hierarchical relationship between Japanese and foreigners in migrant activism whereby the latter are subjected to an invisible and speechless status. The meeting had been organised for more than 10 years. So if they wanted, they could have requested, at least, proper interpretation and full translation of hand-out materials. Instead, what I saw at the meeting was that migrant workers would not make any fuss about translation. They seemed to be indifferent to what was discussed in the meeting, and in this way, to appear happily playing the role of foreigners who are not allowed to speak and who quietly authorise what the Japanese citizens say to the government representatives. Or was I reading too much into this?³⁶

³⁶ I also encountered this 'puzzle' when I attended a demonstration called the 'Day for Foreign Workers' Rights' on April 21, 2010 which attracted about 80 people. At one point, I was asked to distribute leaflets made by some Nambu FWC members. Since the demonstration was organised by three different unions, the Nambu FWC, the KCU and the Zentouitsu, the Nambu FWC members distributed the leaflets to share information about the contents of their labour disputes with the members of other

Pretending to be Foreigners: The KCU's A Day of Action

In order to explore the puzzle I encountered while attending the meeting with government representatives, this section will focus on another instance where categories of citizens and foreigners were widely used: A Day of Action organised by the KCU. This event was selected for two reasons. Firstly, the KCU was the labour union which had an established reputation of bringing a large number of migrant workers to their demonstrations.³⁷ A Day of Action is specifically designed to maximise such strength of the KCU where the majority of union members are migrant workers.³⁸ Therefore, the focus on A Day of Action might provide a useful chance to interrogate how people participated in the event and to reflect on the dynamics of making citizens and foreigners, the same dynamics I observed at the annual meeting with the government.

Secondly, considering the reputation of high turn-out of migrant workers from the KCU at demonstrations and meetings, the focus on their activities might shed some light on the reasons why migrant workers attend these activities. I fathomed that, depending on the purposes of attending migrant activism, one could be indifferent or passionate about the events.

unions as well as passersby. When I was distributing the leaflets to other union members, I soon found out that some union members declined to take the leaflets, saying 'No English' (in English), or 'Can't read Japanese' (in Japanese). When I showed them that the leaflets were written in both English and Japanese, some took them, while others just shook their heads and did not take them. I was left wondering why they did not take the leaflets. Was it because they did not care about the working conditions of other unions members? Or was it simply because they were tired of reading on that day?

³⁷ Interview with Murayama, 28 June 2010.

³⁸ Shipper, *Fighting for Foreigners*.

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This then might clarify the reason behind the general passivity of people identified as foreigners that I observed in the previous section. In this section, after providing some background information on the KCU, I will examine in detail two different motivations by migrant workers to attend the demonstration.

Background Information on the KCU and A Day of Action

The KCU originally began in June 1984 as a labour union which declared it would accept anyone and everyone (i.e. individuals can join the KCU, regardless of nationality).³⁹ In collaboration with the Society in Solidarity with Foreigners in Japan (*Tainichi Gaikokujin to Rentaisuru kai*), the KCU started labour consultations for migrant workers from South Korea, many of them without legal visa status.⁴⁰ This was the result of regular visits (twice a month for 4 years) by Satoshi Murayama, the founder of the KCU, and his colleague, Masako Hiramata from the aforementioned Society in Solidarity (Tainichi), in Kotobuki-cho area in the city of Yokohama which was known as an area where many South Korean migrant workers lived.⁴¹ Consequently in the early years the membership of KCU was primarily made up of South Korean migrant workers.

³⁹ Murayama, Satoshi. (1997) 'Kanagawa City Union no Tainichi Gaikokujin Roudou Soudan Katsudou' [Kanagawa City Union's Labour Consultations for Migrant workers living in Japan], *Roudou Chousa [Labour Research]*, No.344, p.23.

⁴⁰ Some members of the *Tainichi* felt the need to create the system where migrant workers themselves take care of their own problems instead of looking for help from others once the problems occur. They set up a self-support group consisting of migrant women in 2002 called Kalakasan—Migrant Women Empowerment Center.

⁴¹ Murayama, 'Kanagawa City Union no Tainichi Gaikokujin Roudou Soudan Katsudou', p.25. Murayama argues that he and Hiramata visited these migrant workers rather than waiting for them to come to the union office because there was a persistent suspicion of Japanese organisations by Korean workers in Japan.

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Since 1999, the number of union members from Latin America exceeded those from South Korea.⁴² About 90 percent of KCU members are now from Central and South America. For instance, in 2008, 61 percent of labour disputes were brought to the KCU by Peruvian workers, followed by Brazilians (17 percent) and Bolivians (6 percent).⁴³ Many of the people from these countries are so-called *nikkeijin*, Japanese émigré and their second and third generation descendants.⁴⁴

The KCU usually stands out at the events organised jointly by several unions because it always mobilises a large number of people. As one of the KCU union organisers says, ‘Numbers are everything’ when it comes to demonstrations to effectively generate an impact.⁴⁵ Since the KCU always mobilises a large group of people, other unions court it so that the KCU can bring its members to their demonstrations. When the KCU members attend

⁴² Urano, Ejison Yoshiaki. (2007) ‘Zainichi Laten America-jin Roudousha no Sohikika no Kanousei’ [Possibilities of Migrant Workers from Latin America to Organise Unions], *Roudou Houritsu Junpo [10 Days Report on Labour Law]*, No.1650 (June 25), p.58.

⁴³ Murayama, Satoshi (2009) ‘Nikkei Gaikokujin Roudousha no Hakengiri to Tatakau Kanagawa City Union’ [Kanagawa City Union fighting against cutting Nikkei foreign workers], *Roudou Undou Kenkyu Fukkan [Reissue: Labour Union Movements Research]*, Vol.22, No.4, pp.10-15. Between 6 January to 31 May 2010, 104 cases were brought to the KCU. Among them, 50 cases are from migrant workers from Peru, followed by 23 from Brazil and 14 from Japan. See Kanagawa City Union. (2010) ‘Kanagawa City Union Roudou Soudan Jouhou in Ijuuren Dai 8-kai Zenkoku Workshop’ [Information about Kanagawa City Union’s Labour Consultation In the 8th SMJ workshop], handout obtained at the interview with Satoshi Murayama on 28 June 2010.

⁴⁴ Because of the reform of Immigration Control Law in 1990, a new visa category, Long-term Residents (*teijusha*), was introduced to remove work restrictions on *nikkei*, allowing them to work not only as skilled workers but also, crucially, as manual labourers in Japan. Some of them, the relatives of *nikkei*, also come to Japan to work with a visa status of Spouses or Children of Japanese. In 2010, people from Brazil and Peru constitute the 3rd and 5th largest groups of foreign nationals registered in Japan: 230,552 and 54,636 respectively. Ministry of Justice (2010), *Part 1: Immigration Control in Recent Years*, Chart 14.

⁴⁵ Quote used in Shipper, *Fighting for Foreigners*, p.108.

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these events related to migrant workers, they wear yellow vests on which a slogan is written both on the front and the back together with the union's name. These slogans declares: 'Don't allow dismissal of migrant workers!' [*Gaikokujin roudousha no kaiko wo yurusanai!!*] and 'Protect the rights of migrant workers!' [*Gaikokujin roudousha no kenri wo Mamore!*]⁴⁶ Some hold union flags with the union's name written in white letters on bright red cloth. Since the members of other unions and NGOs do not necessarily wear any additional clothes for the occasion, the KCU members make themselves visible to others.

Furthermore, the presence of the KCU is hard to ignore because, unlike other unions, the KCU members provide some music performances whenever they attend demonstrations. They sing several songs in Spanish, including well-known Latin American leftist songs *Venceremos* and *El pueblo unido jamás será vencido* in front of the demonstrators. The lyrics of these songs are modified from the original versions to include some Japanese texts such as 'We will not lose!' [*Makenaizo!*] and 'We will fight!' [*Tatakauzo!*]. The songs were accompanied by a drum beating the rhythm. During the songs, several KCU members also move a big dragon-like doll up and down and walk in a small circle so that the dragon looks as if it is moving. The sheer volume of the sound generated by their performance leaves an unforgettable impression on the participants in the protests.

To Appeal to the Japanese Public

⁴⁶ My translation. My attendance at A Day for Action on 25 June 2010.

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The KCU also utilises the visible collective presence of its members in demonstrations as leverage in industrial relations cases pursued by the KCU. A well-known tactic used by the KCU is to dedicate one whole day to stage a series of protests in front of the accused companies. This event is called A Day of Action (*ichinichi kodo*).⁴⁷ As the name implies, A Day for Action is a one-day event, usually starting from seven thirty in the morning and ending around eight in the evening.⁴⁸ It is held 50 to 60 times every year, meaning that at least once a week, the KCU members organise A Day of Action. Each time, 30 to 60 members attend, about 80 percent of whom are migrant workers.⁴⁹

The same format of protest takes place throughout the event. The protest starts with a speech. Some KCU members, usually the presidents of the KCU or KCU staff, make speeches to explain how each company treats the KCU members badly and to criticise the company's foul play. These speeches are followed by the members chanting several phrases such as 'We will fight together~!' (*Isshoni tatakauzo~!*) in Japanese. The KCU members clench their fists in the air to demonstrate their intention to fight the management.⁵⁰ The chants are followed by several songs sung in Spanish by the KCU union members. The songs are accompanied by the sound of a large

⁴⁷ I translate the phrase, *ichinichi kodo*, as A Day of Action in English. Urano calls it 'Day Long Action'. See Urano, 'Zainichi Laten America-jin Roudousha no Sohikika no Kanousei', p.57. Shipper calls it 'all-day action'. See Shipper, *Fighting for Foreigners*, p.104. Kanagawa City Union translates it as 'One-day Action' in English. See the leaflet titled (2009) 'Kanagawa City Union, 2009. 6.4. [4 June 2009] Oneday Action' issued by the KCU.

⁴⁸ Shipper, *Fighting for Foreigners*, pp.105.

⁴⁹ Ogawa, Kouichi. (2000) 'Nihon ni okeru Gaikokujin Roudousha no Soshiki ka (jou)' [Mobilising Foreign Workers in Japan (Part 1)], *Roudou Houritsu Junpo [10 days Report on Labour Law]*, No.1481 (June 10), p.47.

⁵⁰ See also Shipper, *Fighting for Foreigners*, p.105.

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drum. Some members move a green dragon doll up and down during the songs. After this whole set of activities is done, the KCU moves on to the next venue to stage the protest following the same format.⁵¹ During one action day, the KCU usually visits 3 to 4 companies to protest.

As Ogawa points out, the purpose of A Day of Action is to appeal to the public. By making a protest in front of the company with a large crowd of people, the event attempts to publicise labour disputes and demonstrate the unfair treatment of migrant workers to the public. As Satoshi Murayama, the president of the KCU says, shouting loudly in front of the companies with microphones and making noises with street performances tarnishes the public images of these companies because their neighbouring companies can see that these accused companies have some problems with their employees. This social pressure and the desire to maintain a good company image inevitably puts pressure on the companies, which might result in better deals and smooth solutions to labour disputes.

Importantly, the target audience of their appeal is not just general public but 'Japanese' public. Having attended A Day of Action, Apichai Shipper points out:

Through these disruptive, annoying, or distracting demonstrations, the community workers' unions *effectively engage citizens*, including passersby, in communication with one another on issues concerning foreign workers.⁵²

⁵¹ My participation in A Day of Action on June 25, 2010.

⁵² Shipper, *Fighting for Foreigners*, p.106. Emphasis mine.

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A Day of Action is a chance to appeal to the 'Japanese' public, which includes random passersby, companies with which they have a dispute, and the local community in which these companies are located.

The targeting of the Japanese public as audience is most clearly shown by patterns of language usage at A Day of Action. For example, at one A Day of Action I attended in June, all the speeches made in front of the accused company were made in Japanese.⁵³ Meanwhile, translation between Spanish and Japanese was provided only to inform the participants about the location of toilets, and even a reminder to flush the toilet after use (!). Aside from Toshiba Corporation and Japan Postal Holdings, Nihonseiko (NSK) was picked up by the KCU on that day because a shareholder meeting was held there that morning. Having arrived at the NSK company premises, Murayama, the KCU chairperson, began to explain the labour disputes, which was about unfair dismissal, in Japanese. He used a microphone and spoke as if he was talking directly to the shareholders.

Interestingly, after the set of protesting activities was finished in front of the NSK, there was still some time left until the shareholder meeting would finish. In order to kill the time, Murayama began to make another speech in Japanese and one KCU union member was asked to provide an interpretation in Spanish. This was the only time when translation of some relevant speeches to the demonstration was provided, although the content of the speech was not quite about the labour dispute between NSK and the KCU.

⁵³ The observation made in this section is based on my attendance at A Day of Action, 25 June 2010.

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That had already been explained in the speeches made earlier in Japanese. Instead, Murayama provided a brief history of the KCU and then discussed more general topics such as the corruption of Japanese courts. The shareholders meeting finished in the middle of his speech, and they came out from the NSK building. Murayama immediately stopped his speech and began to emphasise NSK's foul play to the shareholders in Japanese again. The interpretation stopped.

Making the protests predominantly in Japanese produces the category of citizens, in this case, Japanese. It was the 'Japanese' people the protest was designed for, and hence it was the Japanese language that was used. Although KCU staff are fully aware that some members do not understand Japanese, and thus cannot understand what they are protesting about, they do not seem to be bothered by this at all. They just made sure that the protesters knew the location of toilets. This is because A Day of Action is specifically designed to appeal to 'Japanese' people; therefore the speeches have to be made in Japanese. Providing a translation for the KCU members is not a priority.

Furthermore, making the category of citizen is accompanied with the making of the category of foreigner. By inserting songs sung in Spanish, A Day of Action also successfully portrays a 'foreign' atmosphere among the participants. Since most of the participants in A Day of Action are from Central and South America, their appearance can easily blend in with other Japanese people, making it hard to acknowledge who are 'foreigners'.⁵⁴ As

⁵⁴ During A Day of Action, some KCU members mistook me for a migrant worker

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Tanno shows, Japanese employers prefer to hire migrant workers who look 'Japanese' rather than people who look visibly different from the Japanese.⁵⁵ According to Tanno, migrant workers from Latin America have taken over jobs of those from some Asian countries such as Bangladesh who have darker skin colour and look visibly different from the Japanese. For this reason, if the participants in the demonstration sing non-Japanese songs, it sends a message that they *are* 'foreigners' and 'foreigners' are protesting against their employers.

Singing Spanish-language songs during the demonstration not only attaches foreignness to the participants of the event but also regulates the agency of those identified as foreigners and as speechless. During the event, one of the KCU staff members made a casual remark about the reason why the KCU union members sing such songs: 'These people do not really understand the [Japanese] language. So the only thing they can do is to sing a song'.⁵⁶ This remark echoes Murayama's comments: 'Many of the KCU's migrant workers do not understand the [Japanese] language. [...] And this [demonstration] is street action (*gaitou koudou*). They cannot just stand there idly. They need to perform some action'.⁵⁷ Murayama acknowledged that many KCU union members cannot understand Japanese. When showing me the monthly KCU newspaper filled with photos, Murayama explains that,

from Brazil, which further illustrates the difficulty of telling the difference between Japanese and foreigners based on appearance.

⁵⁵ Tanno, Kiyoto. (2002) 'Gaikokujin Roudou Shijou no Bunki no Ronri' [The Mechanism of Migrant Workers Labour Market], in Kajita Takamichi and Takashi Miyajima (eds.) *Kokusai ka Suru Nihon Shakai [Internationalization of Japanese Society]* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press), pp.45-68.

⁵⁶ My translation. Notes from my attendance at A Day of Action, 25 June 2010.

⁵⁷ My translation. Interview with Murayama, 28 June 2010.

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since many KCU members cannot read Japanese, pictures suffice to explain the KCU's activities to them.⁵⁸ Photos and songs, not language, are the only tools of communication for migrant workers at the KCU to express themselves.

To summarise my arguments so far, A Day of Action demonstrates that two threads are intertwined with one another to produce the categories of citizen and foreigner. One thread is to realise the aim of the demonstration, which is, to appeal to the Japanese public, in the framework of binary categories of citizen and foreigner. The demonstration takes place based on the assumption that there are some people called 'Japanese' citizens and identifying the public audience exclusively with the Japanese people. By making the Japanese public the target audience, the demonstration suggests that it is not foreigners but Japanese people who have the power to respond to the outcry of migrant workers and improve the situation. It suggests that tackling the problems of migrant workers is the responsibility of Japanese people, not foreigners.

The second thread is to carry out the above aim by using languages in the same framework where people are identified as either citizens or foreigners. This can be clearly seen in the parts of the demonstration that were accompanied by translation and those that were not. All speeches and chants during the demonstration were made in Japanese and were not translated into other languages such as Spanish and Portuguese. In contrast

⁵⁸ Interview with Murayama, 28 June 2010. See also the leaflet distributed at 'Dai 26-kai Kanagawa City Union Teiki Taikai' [the 26th Kanagawa City Union Commuter Pass Meet], handout at the KCU meeting held in July 11, 2009.

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with the absence of translation in speeches and chants, Japanese-Spanish translation was provided when the KCU staff announced bathroom breaks.

These two threads are intertwined with one another to assign specific subjects to the people identified as citizens and foreigners. Those identified as citizens are put into the realm of politics where their speech is taken politically and they are regarded as capable of taking actions. This is done by appealing to the Japanese to take some political actions about the problems of migrant workers and by exclusively using the Japanese language to incite such actions. In contrast, some people are categorised as foreigners, which puts them outside the realm of politics. They are regarded as incapable of speech and hence excluded from the sphere of politics. As Arendt observes, the crucial distinction between citizens and non-citizens is that it separates them in and outside the sphere of politics. This rings true in the two events I have examined here.

To Exhibit Enthusiasm

Crucially, A Day of Action is designed not only to appeal to the Japanese public but also to demonstrate how serious and committed the protesters are to the cause of the migrant workers in Japan. For the KCU union organisers, A Day of Action is not simply designed to appeal to the Japanese public, but also to check the devotion of the union members. If members of other unions attend this type of one-day action, they are sometimes given a daily allowance. In contrast, the participants in KCU demonstrations are only provided with

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lunch and train fares.⁵⁹ A Day of Action is not an event where the KCU members are asked to attend and receive a daily allowance. Instead the KCU staff use the attendance at A Day of Action as a way to judge how serious the union members are. Depending on their level of commitment to union activities, the KCU staff decide how much they will help to solve labour disputes. In the past, if people did not attend A Day of Action, they were not able to seek any consultations with the KCU union organisers.⁶⁰

In other words, for union members, one purpose of participating in A Day of Action was to exhibit their enthusiasm in front of other protesters who would eventually handle their labour disputes. As Ogawa shrewdly observes:

In reality, the participation in A Day of Action is not necessarily dependent on the eagerness of migrant workers. For migrant workers, attending A Day of Action is above all proof that they have the will to fight with the KCU. That is, it may be that migrant workers attend A Day of Action in order for the KCU to pick up their labour disputes.⁶¹

Therefore the KCU members are also motivated by this hidden, yet pragmatic, incentive to attend A Day of Action.

⁵⁹ Interview with Murayama, 28 June 2010.

⁶⁰ Interview with Murayama, 28 June 2010. Shipper reports that KCU's A Day of Action was conducted four times a month, and attendance of at least one of these events was a prerequisite for KCU union organisers to agree to handle labour disputes. Shipper, *Fighting for Foreigners*, p.105.

⁶¹ My Translation. The sentence begins with 'Ichinichi kodo heno sanko wa kanarazushimo [...]'. Ogawa, Kouichi. (2000) 'Nihon ni okeru Gaikokujin Roudousha no Soshiki ka (ge)' [Mobilising Foreign Workers in Japan (Part 2)], *Roudou Houritsu Junpo [10 days Report on Labour Law]*, No.1483 (July 10), p.28.

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This pragmatic incentive to attend A Day of Action can be explained by the KCU's high rate of resolving industrial relations cases. Each year, the KCU receives about 300 to 500 labour disputes: they range from unpaid workers, accident compensations, unpaid salary, to disenrollment from employment insurance, health insurance and welfare pensions to acts of violence in the workplace.⁶² These disputes are almost single-handedly dealt with by Murayama, a legendary labour union activist and the founder and chairperson of KCU. He started participating in union activities in the early 1970s. His devotion to labour disputes resulted in him being ambushed and beaten by the Japanese mafia (*yakuza*), allegedly hired by unknown business interests, which increased his respect among some migrant workers as well as union activists.⁶³ His long experience as a labour union activist together with his passion to fight for migrant workers are key assets for the KCU to establish a reputation as a union with the ability to solve labour disputes.

The incentives for migrant workers to bring their labour dispute cases to the KCU can be also explained by the union's ability to settle the cases with greater amount of compensation than other unions. Although KCU union members work in small and medium-sized companies, the KCU does not request compensation from these companies but the original companies that hire migrant workers as dispatched labourers. These organisations have a bigger financial base and are well able to pay 60 to 100 percent of the

⁶² Murayama, 'Nikkei Gaikokujin Roudousha no Hakengiri to Tatakau Kanagawa City Union', pp.12-13. See also Ogawa, 'Nihon ni okeru Gaikokujin Roudousha no Soshiki ka (jou)', p.42.

⁶³ Shipper, *Fighting for Foreigners*, p.116.

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compensation requested by the KCU.⁶⁴

The high success rate and the greater compensation seemed to explain the large number of migrant workers contacting the KCU and becoming its members. Although there is no statistical data available, the growing reputation of the KCU seems to directly reflect the number of labour cases brought to the KCU. For instance, in 2008, the KCU received 536 labour dispute cases, and 642 people joined the union. Another union that frequently appeared in the media received about 3000 labour dispute cases, but only 150 to 200 new members.⁶⁵

Taking into account the possible motivations for people to attend union activities, I argue that for some KCU union members, the reasons for attending demonstrations and meetings are not so much about their enthusiasm to fight against injustice that migrant workers face in Japan, but more about performing their enthusiasm in front of other union members who eventually handle their labour disputes. If attending KCU union activities and going to A Day of Action protest is a requisite for their labour disputes to be handled by the KCU, it is not difficult to guess that people must happily attend these events even when they are not generally interested in union activities. In other words, it does not seem to matter for some KCU members whether or not they are informed about the purpose of A Day of Action or given sufficient translation of speeches. Their purpose is to 'prove' that they

⁶⁴ Since the KCU's financial income depends on contributions (15 percent) of the total compensation received by its members, the relatively high compensation it wins through labour disputes results in the KCU having an affluent financial status See Ogawa, 'Nihon ni okeru Gaikokujin Roudousha no Soshiki ka (ge)', p.45.

⁶⁵ Murayama, 'Nikkei Gaikokujin Roudousha no Hakengiri to Tatakau Kanagawa City Union', pp.13-14.

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are committed to union activities so that their labour disputes will be resolved.

In order to exhibit their commitment to activism, some KCU members perform any roles given to them. I argue that, in the context where migrant workers join the KCU union, it is understandable that they happily perform the role of 'foreigners'. As Tsukamoto somewhat sarcastically said, many KCU members sing when they are asked to sing, and dance when they are told to dance.⁶⁶ Instead of demanding translation and complaining about the lack of translation at meetings and demonstrations, they quietly listen to, or pretend to listen to, speeches unintelligible to them. Instead of challenging the speechless position assigned to them, they remain speechless, or pretend to be speechless, and assume the role they are expected to play to make sure that their dedicated performance is surely acknowledged by other union members who are responsible for their labour disputes. When they are told to sing songs in Spanish, they sing songs to pretend that they are passionate about the cause of migrant workers, instead of questioning why they have to keep singing without having chances to make speeches on their own.

The pretence indicates a gap between what they are supposed to be, as speechless foreigners lacking agency, and between what they are, workers who need to have their labour disputes solved. This gap can be seen when migrant workers exhibit their own understanding of the situation in demonstrations and meetings, instead of simply acting in the way in which they are expected to act on these occasions. In this respect, I argue that the

⁶⁶ Interview with Tsukamoto, 15 March 2010.

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following examples point to this gap.

During A Day of Action, the KCU members have to shout quite regularly with their fists high in the air while chanting slogans such as ‘We will fight together~!’ (*Isshoni tatakauzo~!*) ‘We will not lose~!’ (*Makenaizo~!*) ‘Stop unfair dismissal~!’ (*Futoukaiko yamero~!*) in Japanese. When I attended the protest, I saw some union members struggling to chant in Japanese. Some simply moved their mouths to pretend that they were shouting something; others made some shouting sounds to imitate the sound of chanting in Japanese. At one point, I was standing next to Carlos from Bolivia.⁶⁷ When the chanting part started, he started saying something entirely different while giving me a mischievous look. Others standing close to him noticed this, and they all eventually began to chant something different. They shouted sufficiently loud for people around them to hear. Probably for fun? After all, it has been a very hot and long day. However, they did not shout loud enough for the KCU staff standing at the front of the group to hear them. Later, I asked if they knew what the chanting meant, and they only shrugged their shoulders. I was not sure if they even understood my question, either in English or Japanese.⁶⁸

While the protesters moved to the front of JP Holding, there was a skirmish over the location of the protest between the security guards of the building of JP Holding and the KCU union members. Due to the Road and

⁶⁷ The name has been changed.

⁶⁸ Even if they did understand my question, I doubt that they would tell me exactly why they were chanting something different. Disclosing such information shows that they are not serious about the union activities and, if this became known to the KCU union staff, they would certainly risk the possibility of KCU not dealing with their labour disputes.

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Transportation Law, the KCU protests were conducted within the premise of JP Holding. However, because these security guards were new, they did not know this past practice, and requested the KCU union members to leave the premise. The small arguments between the security guards and the KCU union organisers grew to a situation in which the KCU union members burst into the building together with the KCU staff. Once inside the building, some of the KCU members suddenly began to sing songs in Spanish. That was the first time I saw them singing the songs without being asked to do so by others on that day. Meanwhile, about half of the KCU union members attending the event quickly and quietly hovered around the entrance of the building and watched at a distance. Some of them quietly left the building. A few others even left the company premise and just lingered in the general area, occasionally looking at the ongoing exchanges of shouting between the KCU union organisers and security guards.

Among the seemingly angry figures of the KCU union members shouting and chanting in protest, some appeared to pretend to shout. They shouted entirely different chants while maintaining the image that they were shouting what they had been told to shout. When they were asked to leave the venue of the protest, some union members quickly stopped protesting and receded into the background. Perhaps to protect themselves from getting in trouble instead of insisting that they have the right to protest. After all, if they did not so much care about the cause of migrant workers, why would they bother risking themselves by confronting the security guards?

Considering the incentives for KCU union members to attend the

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protest, I argue that these occasions suggest that people are pretending to be the people categorised as foreigners. By singing songs in foreign languages and chanting while listening to the messages delivered in Japanese, the KCU union members make sure that their labour disputes would be resolved by the union organisers. The KCU's high success rate and its reputation for demanding relatively large amounts of compensation are attractive incentives for migrant workers to join the KCU and attend its demonstrations. Especially when attendance is used as a criterion of whether or not the KCU union organisers will handle their case, members can be easily motivated by the desire to resolve their own labour disputes rather than being interested in and supporting union activities. At the demonstrations that produced the categories of citizen and foreigner and identified some as 'Japanese' and others as 'foreigners', KCU members happily accept the role of foreigner and play with it rather than resisting and challenging the categorisation. They perform the role of foreigners expected by the KCU union organisers, shouting when they are told to shout, singing when they are told to sing and dancing when they are told to dance.

The second purpose I pointed out is not limited to the KCU members. When migrant workers contact organisations such as the NGOs and labour unions, some of them are simply motivated to solve the problems they have. Consequently, some organisations face the situation where, once their personal problems are resolved, these migrant workers who were once active in joining the activities of the organisations, gradually fade away. Ogasawara (et al) argues that, although several attempts were made to increase the level

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of involvement of migrant workers in union activities in the early 1990s, they appeared to be futile.⁶⁹ Shipper similarly says: ‘Once their [foreign workers] disputes are resolved, they typically leave the workers’ unions. In other words, foreign workers in Japan join these labor unions not to strengthen worker solidarity and the labor movement but to seek resolution of specific labor disputes with employers’.⁷⁰ Naoichi Ishizaki and Masatoshi Yorimitsu report the same point as Shipper and Ogasawara (et al), with an example of a *nikkei* Peruvian union, which did not last long after the labour dispute was settled despite its complete victory.⁷¹ Sachi Takaya highlights this point with an example of the FWBZ in which there is a tension between interns and trainees from China and non-status migrant workers from South Asia and Africa.⁷² The latter criticised the former for leaving FWBZ once their labour disputes are resolved.

Therefore, the puzzle I encountered at the government talk can be explained by the purpose of migrant workers being different from the purpose of the meeting which was to improve the overall situation of migrant workers through meaningful discussions with government representatives. For some migrant workers, it might be that they care more about their own personal situations than about the improvement of migrant workers’ situation in

⁶⁹ Ogasawara, Kimiko (et al.) (2001) ‘Gaikokujin Kyojuusha no Kenri to Sanka’ [The Rights and Participation of Foreign Residents], in NIRA Citizenship Research Group (eds.) *Tabunka Shakai no Sentaku [Choices in Multicultural Society]* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai-sha), p.174.

⁷⁰ Shipper, *Fighting for Foreigners*, p.94.

⁷¹ Ishizaki and Yorimitsu, ‘Nihon ni okeru Roudoukumiai no Gaikokujin Roudousha ni taisuru Shienkatsudou to Soshiki ka’.

⁷² Takaya, Sachi. (2008) Datsu Kokuminka sareta Taikouteki Koukyouken no Kiban [The Base of the Denationalised Counter-public Sphere], *Shakaigaku Hyouron [Japanese Sociological Review]*, Vol.60, No.1, pp.132-134.

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general, which can only indirectly influence them. For these migrant workers, it mattered little what was actually discussed because their reasons for attending the meeting was to exhibit their enthusiasm to other union members and NGO staff who have power over how their own labour disputes were to be handled. In order to leave a good impression on these people, attendance at the meeting was crucial. This means that understanding the contents of the meeting was insignificant for these participants. They played the part of silent foreigner to give authority to others who identified themselves as citizens and dominated the discussion. Hovering in the background is the pretence through which migrant workers attempted to attain their personal goals.

Chapter Conclusions

The prime task of the present chapter was to begin to explore the tenacity of category-vocabularies by using the example of migrant activism in Japan. Having identified the lack of examination on the continuous reliance on category-vocabularies in BM scholarship, I argued that the focus on this tenacity might shed some light on other implications of the politics of categories, beyond the familiar themes of control and resistance. Since the category-vocabularies are persistently used in the context where bordering practices challenge the simple lined image of the boundary, an interrogation of the tenacity of categories might lead to some suggestions on what kinds of images are now attached to the boundary. Following this logic, the present chapter intended to explore two questions: In what contexts people resort to

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categories of citizen and foreigner? What are differences and commonalities among various instances where these category-vocabularies are utilised in activism?

In order to explore these questions, the chapter began by putting category-vocabularies into the context of migrant worker activism. Doing so was crucial to identify one important thread which ran, and will run, throughout the analysis of migrant activism in Japan: production of categories is linked with drawing linguistic boundaries. Given the lack of common languages among the participants in migrant activism in Japan, the question of languages as mother/foreign tongues runs in parallel with the question of categories of citizen/foreigner. By drawing on the work of Anzaldúa, I demonstrated that drawing linguistic boundaries generates particular subjects alongside the territorial boundaries. Read together with Rousseau and Arendt, Anzaldúa's observations indicate that, while citizens monopolise the domain of politics by speaking the tongues representative of the political community, those who speak alien tongues have their ability to have their voice heard politically taken away.

In order to demonstrate how this link between linguistic boundaries and category-vocabularies plays out in migrant activism in Japan, I then moved on to examine two separate instances where the participants in activism relied on categories of citizen and foreigner to achieve the goals for these occasions. I argued that there are two different purposes affecting the ways in which people used categories. The first aim is to effectively address and highlight the problems migrant workers are facing either to government

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representatives or the Japanese public in general. In order to achieve this aim, translation between Japanese and foreign languages was provided to the participants joining activism to create a 'foreign' presence. Some people were categorised as foreigners who could not speak Japanese and who could only express themselves either in silence or songs in foreign languages. Translation carried no substantial meaning of its own to *actually* make sure that people without Japanese ability could follow the discussions of the meetings and contents of the demonstrations they attended. Instead, the meetings and demonstrations were dominated by people who identified themselves as Japanese along with their ability to command the Japanese language. The 'Japanese' led the meetings and demonstrations and became vocal and visible, while others were categorised as foreigners and made silent. In this way, the creation of foreignness, through specific translation practices, was indicative of identifying some as citizens and others as foreigners.

The finding of my examination on the government talk pointed to the puzzle: some of the participants in migrant activism seemed indifferent to the lack of poor translation. Instead of challenging the category assigned to them, they slept in meetings where the issue of migrant workers was intensely discussed with government representatives, and mocked sloganeering by chanting different phrases from the ones given to them. Generally, they were not even bothered by the poor translation which prevented them from following discussions held at the meetings and informing themselves about the reasons for demonstrations.

I argued that some answers to this puzzle could be found in the second

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aim which is hovering in the background of the first aim. The second aim is to make more instrumental gains, that is, to have labour disputes pursued by unions. For some people, attending meetings and demonstrations is to demonstrate their 'seriousness' to the union organisers and NGOs staff who will take care of their disputes. Since some unions specifically observe the seriousness of their members and use such observation as a criterion of whether they work on individual labour cases or not, it is crucial for some people to make their presence recognised in union activities and play their assigned role of foreigners. In this regard, the lack of translation meant little to some participants at demonstrations and meetings. For them, what was more important was to attend the meetings and demonstrations so that they could exhibit their fake passion to the cause of migrant activism. Instead of questioning the lack of translation, people identified as foreigners pretend as if they were relegated to a speechless and voiceless status. Instead of challenging the monopoly of speech by citizens, they pretended as if they bestow silent authority to citizens so that they could speak on behalf of foreigners. Performing the roles assigned by categories was crucial for them to make instrumental and more personal gains. It is in this intersection between performing the categories and producing categories that category-vocabularies tenaciously appear and reappear in migrant activism.