

## Research Project

### The Divisive Power of Citizenship

#### Third-party funded project

**Project title** The Divisive Power of Citizenship

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Erosion of nationality and the politicization of citizenship have become dominant features of discourse in Western democracies. However, these issues are not new: since the beginning of the 21st century Western states have been loosening historic hurdles to de-naturalization of their citizens, mainly as a consequence of the War on Terror and stricter treatment of migrants. In addition to this re-framing of citizenship – as a privilege that can be lost – supra-national organizations pose orthogonal challenges. For example, the European Union grants its citizens free movement, thereby relaxing the historic connection between citizenship and geographical region and replacing nationality with a new form of multi-layered citizenship.

This project, "The Divisive Power of Citizenship", seeks to relate and connect these recent processes effectively with historical precedents to create an expanded understanding of citizenship which can both reveal new insights about the past as well as the contemporary situation.

Focusing on East Asia in the early 20th century, we examine conditions applying to European merchants, whose citizenship bestowed distinct jurisdiction and rights compared with their Asian contemporaries – creating multilayered trans-cultural communities. Such competing communities can be analyzed in terms of colonial privilege, racism and nationalism, affording new perspectives on historical communities and also provide a lens through which to view the tumultuous processes at work today. Chronologically this survey spans the period between 1919 and 1945, witnessing the climax and decline of western dominance in East Asia and also the rupture precipitated by the Pacific War.

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