



**STATELESS**  
**Tien-shi Lara Chen**  
*translated by Louis Carlet*

“ *In the springtime of the year that I was twenty-one, I found myself stuck at the border between two familiar countries, unable to enter either.*

*I had never felt my statelessness so keenly.* ”

Japan's 1972 termination of diplomatic ties with the Republic of China left 9,200 Chinese residents stateless. Chen Tien-shi Lara was one of them, born to Chinese parents in Yokohama's Chinatown. What does it mean to be stateless? What does it feel like?

In a lively blend of life writing, auto-ethnography, and study of stateless communities around Asia, this book unpacks the idea of citizenship by showing the hidden everyday narratives and lived experiences of stateless persons who have no legal ties to any nation state. Originally published in Japanese, this adapted and updated English edition critically engages with questions of borders, mobility, belonging and identity.

We follow Chen's engaging autobiographical account of her bi-cultural upbringing and Japanese education, and how her experience of statelessness eventually led her into a career spanning academia and activism. Across different levels of analysis, the author points out the contradictions inherent in the concepts of nationality, nation-state and citizenship, in a world where individual nationality, identity and experience are increasingly complex. She concludes that the current system of regulating individuals with citizenship is unworkable in the long run. Stateless is a fascinating read on borders, states and identities.

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