

Department of Political Science

"Caught in the Crossfire: The Chinese Indian Community and the Deterioration of India-China Relations, 1947-1962"

Professor Tansen Sen

Department of History, Baruch College, City University of New York

This talk focuses on the ordeals of a Chinese resident in India named Chang Xiufeng, who, drawn by the cultural interactions initiated by the Rabindranath Tagore, went to Santiniketan in 1947 to study painting under the famous Indian artist Nandalal Bose. He later married a Calcutta-based Chinese woman and taught at the Zhonghua Chinese School in Kalimpong, near the India-China border. From almost the time he reached Santiniketan, Chang was suspected of being a Communist agent trying to propagate Marxist and Maoist ideas in India. In 1960, when political relations between India and China deteriorated, Chang was arrested for instigating and supporting anti-Indian activities in Kalimpong. He was imprisoned in Darjeeling until he was deported in May 1961.

The examination of Chang Xiufeng's life in India reveals the complex relationship between India and China during the post-colonial period, when nationalism, territorial claims and regional geopolitics became important factors in bilateral relations. It demonstrates key shifts in mutual perceptions and trust between the two countries during the 1950s, a decade that has been usually hailed as a period of cordial brotherhood. All this also indicates the significant impact geopolitics had on the Chinese diasporic community that had started forming in India since the late eighteenth century.



Tansen Sen is Professor of history at Baruch College, City University of New York, and the founding director of the Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai. He received his MA from Peking University and PhD from the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade: The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600-1400* (2003; 2016) and *India, China, and the World: A Connected History* (forthcoming). He has co-authored (with Victor H. Mair) *Traditional China in Asian and World History* (2012) and edited *Buddhism Across Asia: Networks of Material, Cultural and Intellectual Exchange* (2014). He is currently working on a book about Zheng He's maritime expeditions in the early fifteenth century and co-editing (with Engseng Ho) the *Cambridge History of the Indian Ocean*, volume 1.

Date: Thursday, June 22, 2017

Time: 09:30 – 11:00

Venue: SAI, Room 316

All are cordially invited!