

When Culture Meets State Diplomacy

The Case of Cheena Bhavana

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In the sleepy town of Santiniketan, West Bengal, India, lies a two-storey building with a plaque in Chinese. From right to left the four characters read *Zhongguo xueyuan* (中國學院) or, in English, the ‘China Academy’ (or ‘Chinese Hall’). Attributed to the chairman of the Nationalist (Kuomintang [KMT]) government, Lin Sen (林森) (1868–1943), the plaque marks the building’s construction, dated the twentieth-sixth year of the Chinese republic (1937). Since its inauguration, the building has hosted Cheena Bhavana, currently the Chinese Studies Department of Visva-Bharati University. The Chinese leader’s gesture echoed Mohandas K. Gandhi’s (1869–1948) poetic evocation, in a 1937 letter addressed to Rabindranath Tagore, of the then-newly inaugurated building as ‘a symbol of living contact between China and India’, two traditionally dominant cultures in Asia from which Buddhism and Confucianism originated. ‘Yes’, the Mahatma wrote in another letter to Cheena Bhavana’s founder,

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Tan Yunshan (譚雲山) (1898–1983), ‘indeed, we want cultural contact between the two nations’ (Tan 1957: 16).

However, in the years that followed its foundation, Cheena Bhavana became caught up in the complicated and politically delicate interactions between China, the Indian Independence movement, and the British Raj. Its long-term director, Tan, a peripatetic Buddhist who spent most of his adult life in British colonies and independent India, was a shrewd operator who walked the tightrope between academic pursuits and ideological alignments. At Visva-Bharati, as V.G. Nair (1958: viii) noted, Tan counted among his colleagues the British Anglian priest Charles Freer Andrews (1871–1940) and the Italian Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci (1894–1984). Like these two other foreigners, Tan had much admiration for Gandhi and his brand of spirituality. Unlike Andrews, but not unlike the fascist-leaning Tucci, Tan established close rapport with the government that ran his own country, which supported his cultural-spiritual pursuits abroad.¹

However, if there was one theme that was a constant in Tan’s career, at least as it was presented to the public, it was his aloofness from politics. The Sino-Indian Cultural Society, which funded Cheena Bhavana until 1949, vowed, as its general constitution (1943) put it, to ‘strictly keep away from any political movement’ (Tan 1944: 24). ‘[T]he life of a political movement’, Tan (1944: 24) stressed with rhetorical flourish, in a speech marking the inauguration of the Jaipur branch of the Sino-Indian Cultural Society, ‘is always short and it changes like a chameleon ... [T]he life of our Society and the relationship between our two great countries must be long and permanent.’ The society’s strategy, which was no doubt also Tan’s except where wartime Japan was concerned, was to ‘never participate in any work against any State or Race or Government’ (Tan 1944: 24). This persistence in staying above the political fray paid off. In 1950, as questions hung over the future of an enterprise that was so financially dependent on the recently deposed Nationalist state, Tan ([1950] 1958: 75) assured his detractors that he was not a politician and that the Sino-Indian Cultural Society was ‘entirely a cultural and non-political organisation’. Cheena Bhavana, ‘not a Government concern’, received the Communist premier Zhou Enlai (1898–1976) during his 1955 visit to India.

The stark dichotomy between culture and politics that Tan held dear does not do justice to the complexities and nuances that characterized the relationship between Cheena Bhavana and the various states and political forces at work across Asia. The Pacific War put Cheena Bhavana in the vortex of great power diplomacy. The open allegiances, simmering tensions, and publicized statements of sympathy traded between Chinese leaders, British-Indian officials, and Indian nationalists could not but affect Cheena Bhavana, an organization that regularly received compliments from the likes of Nationalist elders and senior Indian National Congress members. More pertinently for this chapter, the intrigues that surrounded state leaders, officials, and civil-society activists highlight the convergences and clashes between ‘culture’ and ‘politics’, anti-imperialism and an emerging world order, and various nationalisms in a larger regional context. The fact that Cheena Bhavana played unmistakably political functions in Sino-Indian diplomacy was due not primarily to the support it received from senior members of the Chinese state and Indian nationalists, but to the permeability between culture, politics, and diplomacy that was immanent in a conjuncture when the reigning international order—the nation-state, capitalism, Euro-American hegemony—was in disarray.

This chapter echoes many of the themes that underscore this volume. It reflects on the promise, as well as the pitfalls, of China–India interactions at a time before nation-state diplomacy became totally dominant. Tan Yunshan, Cheena Bhavana, and the KMT regime displayed myriad qualities that make it difficult for them to be contained within single categories. Tan was steeped in romantic idealism and his institutional enterprise embodied a radical critique of capitalist modernity, yet the man himself showed hard-nosed pragmatism in securing financial support from the KMT state and accommodated himself to its political agenda. The KMT, while leading an embattled nation-state that was increasingly being drawn into an international system dominated by Britain and USA, also styled itself as a revolutionary movement standing in solidarity with anti-colonial activists in India. The Janus-faced character of the protagonists in this chapter rendered the critical potential of Chinese epistemological engagements with India in respect of colonialism much more ambiguous than the cases examined in Section I of this volume.

The Politics of Culture

In China and beyond, elevating culture and treating it as a lofty pursuit, kept strictly apart from political realities, was a hallmark of modern conservative self-identity. In her pioneering article on modern Chinese conservatism, Charlotte Furth (1976: 30) observed that all Republican Chinese intellectuals were modernizers in one way or another. What distinguished the conservatives among them was their insistence that cultural and moral issues be kept apart from politics and the forces that controlled the power of the state. In other words, conservatives did not resist reforms but saw culture as an autonomous and stable human endeavour insulated from the vagaries and chaos that afflicted early twentieth-century China. More recently, however, Edmund Fung has argued (2010: 96–127) that by working to mobilize cultural heritage in order to buttress national identity and drive social and moral transformation, conservative intellectuals also effected the convergence between cultural and political agendas. ‘Politicocultural nationalism’, as Fung (2010: 96–127) called this strain of thought, was not partisan but tended to be ‘reformist, pro-state, proauthority’ and make ‘loyal critics’ well-disposed to a government that was capable of maintaining social order and introducing reforms. It also enabled morally charged critiques of government systems such as Western liberal democracy. This identification of culture as an ‘ethical pedagogy’ (Eagleton 2000: 7), healing political differences and producing a common humanity, was not specific to China. Chinese cultural conservatism, particularly its aversion to political struggle, would not be out of place among Europeans such as Matthew Arnold and Friedrich Schiller.

What was, however, peculiar to early twentieth-century China was that culture became the arena from which old politics was discarded and a new one created. The 1910s saw what intellectual historian Wang Hui (2016: 44–5, 59–60) aptly called a ‘cultural turn’ in Chinese intellectual thought. Radicals and conservatives alike saw cultural transformation as the key to transcending European modernity, whose bourgeois nation-state system and freely competitive capitalist economy were in deep crisis. The Great War, commonly known then as the ‘European War’ (Ouzhan [歐戰]), along with China’s aborted early experiments with parliamentary and party politics, shredded the

prestige that Western political, economic, and military systems had heretofore enjoyed in the East. The fairy tale of industrial progress lost its spell for the intelligentsia across Asia in favour of alternative world views arising out of Eastern spirituality and socialisms. While celebrating traditions, figures such as Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), Liang Qichao (梁啟超) (1873–1929), and Liang Shuming (梁漱溟) (1893–1988) shared with May Fourth iconoclasts an aversion to liberal capitalism. Appeals to ‘culture’, ‘civilization’, and ‘thought’ were seen as ways of constructing new political subjects to replace discredited ones. By leveraging national cultures into solutions to how the global human community should be organized in the future, Chinese and Asian thinkers and activists worked to reinvent politics and ground it in new ethical commitments.

In many ways, Cheena Bhavana emerged at the tail end of a historical moment that began in the 1910s when numerous publishers, study societies, and editorial boards mushroomed in China. First broached by Tagore with Liang Qichao, the institute was conceived in the midst of many cultural experimentations in both China and India. Its establishment, which almost coincided with the beginning of full-scale hostilities between China and Japan in 1937, was an important addition to Tagore’s project to craft an alternative to Western modernity. Founded in 1921 with proceeds from the Bengali savant’s Nobel Prize money, Visva-Bharati represented a rebuttal to the bureaucratized, elitist institutions run by colonial educators from modern Indian cities such as Delhi and Calcutta (now Kolkata). Writing in *Dongfang zazhi* (東方雜誌) [*Eastern Miscellany*], an influential Shanghai-based magazine, Tan (1929: 21–30) hailed Visva-Bharati, to which he gave the cosmopolitan moniker ‘Indian International University’ (‘Yindu guoji daxue’ [印度國際大學]), as a bastion of egalitarianism and progressive values. On its rural and austere campus, men and women, professors and workers, and people from different countries studied, played, and lived together as one wholesome community. Instead of being trapped in concrete-and-steel buildings and dictated by the ticking of mechanical clocks, ‘Eastern education’ (*dongfang jiaoyu* [東方教育]) offered students the freedom to engage in deep conversations with their teachers beyond the strictures of the classroom and the urban colonial institutional machine they embodied. Likewise, in the proposal he made to Lin Sen, Tagore (1934: 2) submitted that

Visva-Bharati was conceived 'to promote the spirit of Eastern Culture, of which the Indian and Chinese Cultures are the main pillars'. Culture and spirit, counted upon to bring unity between India, China, and their Asian neighbours, were the antithesis of the myopic materialism and muscular nationalism that energized European countries' conquests of Asia and of one another. Tagore and his associate Tan Yunshan crafted an intellectual response to the crisis of a violent and unjust modernity, with Visva-Bharati and Cheena Bhavana as its institutional embodiments. Paradoxically, the desire to transcend the corrupt and unsustainable global nation-state system attracted the earnest attention of one nation-state, one colonial state, and a nationalist movement working to inject India into the very order about which Tagore and Tan were, to say the least, highly ambivalent.

Tagore and Tan's strategy for engagement with the Nationalist regime, whose financial backing was critical to Cheena Bhavana's establishment, was to treat it not as a formidable state apparatus committed to industrial and military modernization but as a facilitator of civilizational renaissance. In the letter that accompanied Tagore's request for funding for his project, the Nobel laureate recounted learning from 'Prof. Tan Yun-shan of your heroic struggles for the resuscitation and revival of your most ancient and superb nation with its historic and magnificent culture'.² The Nationalist state was the custodian of a once glorious culture waiting to be awakened from its long stupor, as if China's resurgence under the Nationalist state was but poetic justice in a world dominated by Euro-America. Likewise, Tan's only extended exposé of contemporary China, published as a series of lectures in 1938, treated the government led by Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) (1887–1975) as part of a larger process whereby Chinese civilization recalibrated its once 'stable foundation' against the West. Since the Opium War, Tan (1938b: 67–8) told his audience at Andhra University, China had felt that it had to imitate the expansionist but advanced Western civilization. Initially drawn only to Western technology, China become increasingly beholden to foreign political and moral values. While there was the occasional Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培) (1868–1940) who worked to reconcile the East and the West, the bulk of the New Culture Movement 'proved very destructive of Chinese Culture'. Fortunately, 'the Chinese culture movement ha[d] entered into a new phase' on the Nationalists' watch

(Tan 1938b: 67–8). Chiang's New Life Movement, launched in 1934, redressed the nihilist tendencies of the New Culture Movement by carrying on Cai's project. The state-sponsored initiative aimed 'to take Chinese philosophy and ethics as the foundation of Chinese culture and then to assimilate the Western scientific spirit' (Tan 1938b: 67–8). That the 'culture movement' followed on the heels of a bloody campaign against the Chinese Communists and was thus deeply implicated in an extended political feud between two militarized parties did not warrant even a single mention.

To be sure, Tan's identification with the New Life Movement and the Nationalist state as cultural projects was not without historical basis. The KMT was keen on promoting its movement as an expression of Chinese spiritual and ethical values, which, along with Eastern cultural practices such as Buddhism and Confucianism, were set to liberate humankind from the West's materialism and moral nihilism. For Nationalist China, as for Japan, celebration of Eastern civilizational superiority was tied to nation-state building with imperialist hues. For many members of civil society, the East's spiritual wisdom transcended national boundaries (Duara 2003: 99–103). Tan mostly belonged to the latter group, although his pan-Asianism was by no means anathema to the Nationalist party-state. Likewise, senior Nationalists were adept in navigating the ambiguity of Tagore and Tan's ideological commitments, freely exploiting pan-Asianist, anti-colonial, and internationalist discourses in their diplomatic manoeuvres. These shifts illuminate the convergence and tensions between, on the one hand, the KMT's anti-imperialist and even prophetic identity vis-à-vis a rapacious Western-dominated global order, and, on the other hand, its increasingly embedded role in the geopolitical power play that was the *modus operandi* of the nation-state system.

Uneasy Convergence of Nationalisms

The years leading up to Cheena Bhavana's establishment until the beginning of the Second World War saw the coming together of Chinese nationalism and Indian anti-colonialism. For different reasons and with varying degrees of enthusiasm, the KMT and the Indian National Congress were both open to collaboration with movements in other countries that challenged the dominance of European powers

in Asia. In its diplomacy and management of centrifugal frontier regions inherited from the Qing Empire, Nationalist China partook in an Asianist discourse to affirm China's own civilizational superiority, seek allies among other Asian societies, and appeal to non-Han populations. Tan, a lay Buddhist, offered to be a link between the KMT's stronghold in southeastern China, Tibet, and India. As a pan-Asian religion, Buddhism was a promising platform enabling China's search for regional allies in its affirmation of the East's moral import. It was no coincidence, then, that the main theoretician of Asianism in the Nationalist government, Examination Yuan President Dai Jitao (戴季陶) (1891–1949), was a devout Buddhist adept in blending his faith with state and military agendas (Xue 2005: 110–14).

Tan's religiosity easily played into the nationalist politics of India and China, while his career also bridged the two societies in a practical sense. A native of Hunan province, Tan spent most of his life outside China. During his four-year stay in British Malaya, Tan established himself as an educator and editor in the Southeast Asian Chinese community, from which he initially hoped to draw funds for Cheena Bhavana. In 1928, at Tagore's invitation, he joined the faculty of Visva-Bharati to teach Chinese. Soon enough, Tan became a keen observer of the Congress movement. In December the same year, he travelled to Calcutta to attend the Indian National Congress session, at which a resolution was passed demanding that Britain grant India dominion status. Tan portrayed his involvement in this highly political event as a religious pilgrimage, a chance to meet Gandhi. In the end, he only secured what he recalled in 1948 as a 'distant darshan' (Tan 1948b: 26). His choice of the Indic word for sight of a deity to describe his encounters with Gandhi—the two men finally met in April 1931 at Sabramati Ashram, where they discussed the Congress's strategy for dealing with the British and Sino-Indian collaboration—resonated with the premium that Tan's Chinese-language publications put on the Mahatma's sagely or saintly (*sheng* [聖]) qualities. Analogously, his visit to the Dalai Lama, who governed Tibet as a de facto independent state, as part of a Chinese government mission was described as a disciple seeking an audience with the 'Living Buddha'.

The fact that Tan's religious pursuits were so regularly translated into engagement with political figures and organizations worked to his advantage and that of the two leading nationalist movements in

China and India. Shortly after his putative darshan of Gandhi, Tan travelled to Nanjing and Shanghai to relaunch Tagore's Cheena Bhavana project, which was first mooted in 1924.³ He was warmly received by prominent Buddhists such as the reformist monk Taixu (太虛) and philosopher Ouyang Jingwu (歐陽竟無) (1871–1943). More significantly, Tan secured the blessing of powerful Nationalists such as Dai Jitao and, according to British intelligence reports, Chen Lifu (陳立夫) (1900–2001).⁴ The latter headed a major clique within the party and commanded a sophisticated network of spies, party and government officials, publishers, and journalists. In 1933, the Sino-Indian Cultural Society was founded in the Chinese capital. Despite his access to the corridors of power, Tan consistently wrote of organic, bottom-up support. 'The Chinese people', he recalled ([1950] 1958: 73), 'generally regard[ed] Gurudeva Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi as modern Buddhas or Bodhisattvas in India'. Popular enthusiasm, along with the historical connections between the two countries, led naturally to Tan's good fortune. Tan's wish was for a new stream of pilgrims traversing the Himalayas that would transcend state politics. This was intended, as he explained in a magazine run by the secretive Blue Shirts, to fashion the 'future of world culture' (*shijie weilai wenhua* [世界未來文化]) and to overcome global crises brought about by Western culture. Tan's description of culture, it bears stressing, subsumed political and economic issues and referred to Sun Yat-sen's maxim that China should ally itself with weak nations in the East (Tan 1935: 1–3). Twentieth-century Sino-Indian enmity enlisted the help of politicians even as it drew on Liang and Tagore's critique of the modern socio-political order. Tan's appeal to culture was put to good use by Chinese Nationalists when they asserted their own self-identity as anti-colonialists coming to the rescue of fellow Asians.

If the 'cultural turn' in 1910s China cast a shadow of intellectual doubt over the nation-state system and gave rise to new political movements, the synergies between intellectual and political experimentation against the reigning world order began to unravel in the 1930s. The First World War, significant as an intellectual event, was a conflict in which the Chinese state participated on the margins. What eventually became the Second World War, however, engaged the Nationalist political machinery fully as not only a defender against encroaching enemies but also a power broker in the beleaguered capitalist

nation-state system. This system, dominated by Britain and USA, was precisely the status quo against which friendship between China and India was projected. As Tagore hoped, Cheena Bhavana was built with funding injected by none other than Chiang Kai-shek himself through the Sino-Indian Cultural Society, an India chapter of which was founded in 1934. At its inauguration in April 1937, the poet spoke of 'old friends' coming together again after centuries of isolation. However, Sino-Indian amity was not just about the two nations but about 'defend[ing] our humanity against the insolence of the strong' and refusing to remain 'hypnotised and dragged by the prosperous West behind its chariot' (Tan 1957: 43–4). Simply put, Cheena Bhavana was the harbinger of a moral, reciprocal human commons freed from the barricades that divided nation-states. Congress President Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), represented by his daughter Indira (1917–84), saw the comradeship between China and India as embodying the indomitable 'spirit of man' resisting fascism and imperialism (Tan 1957: 16). From Nanjing, Dai Jitao's congratulatory telegram (*Xin xinyuebao* (新新月報) [*New New Monthly*] 1937)—hoping that the school would contribute to human well-being and world unity (*datong* [大同])—echoed the generous spirit expressed by Indian leaders. On the eve of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Nanjing and Santiniketan recalled post–Great War interrogations of Euro-American civilization, a position Tagore had presented to a suspicious audience on his visit to China thirteen years earlier.

Yet, by 1937, any appeal to culture as a realm untainted by political strife had become compromised, as organized nationalism in both China and India turned both countries into sophisticated geopolitical players. Nationalist China's credentials as the custodian of an alternative global order to the rapacious one dominated by Western civilization was, to say the least, long in doubt. The Indian National Congress itself noted that the KMT regime under Chiang Kai-shek had relied on 'the support of feudal and bourgeois interests and understanding with foreign imperialisms' (Lohia 1938: 39–40). It was only after the 1936 Xi'an Incident that China, with a more inclusive political climate, returned to 'the front-line of world anti-imperialism', and it was on account of this new development that the Indian nationalists threw their support behind Chiang's government (Lohia 1938: 39–40). Nanjing's interest in the Indian nationalist movement ran deep; it hosted the eccentric

Raja Mahendra Pratap (1886–1979) and funded Ghadar activists.⁵ Its engagement with the Congress since the late 1930s was marked by a mix of anti-colonial idealism, Asianist sentiments, and cool-headed geopolitical calculation. While the Congress was assembling a medical mission at Communist general Zhu De's (朱德) (1886–1976) request, Tan met Nationalist top brass, including Chiang Kai-shek in Wuhan, to discuss Sino-Indian cooperation. In August 1939, Nehru flew into the Nationalist wartime capital Chongqing to pledge solidarity with China in its fight against Japanese imperialism. Emerging from the visit was a tacit agreement that the two nationalist parties would work together by synchronizing their propaganda and avoiding any possible rapprochement between Britain and Japan. The KMT and Congress would 'liaise with one another discreetly' (*anzhong miqie lianxi* [暗中密切聯繫]) in the form of cultural cooperation, making use of existing cultural, educational, and religious organizations. The Sino-Indian Cultural Society was named specifically as a body capable of presenting an uncontroversial guise to collaboration between China's ruling party and a movement opposed to the British colonial government.⁶ Much as Tan claimed that his role as a bridge between Indian freedom fighters and Chinese leaders transcended politics, both sides were deeply cognizant of the political sensitivities involved in the convergence of two Asian nationalist parties. British India's scrutiny of Tan's activities, as I show later, proved them right.

Putting Culture to Work

The fact that culture segued naturally into realpolitik and vice versa is well illustrated by the 'Outline of Sino-Indian Cultural Collaboration', a statement of intent tasking the Sino-Indian Cultural Society, led by Chen Lifu's ally Zhu Jiahua (朱家驊) (1893–1963), to coordinate 'cultural cooperation enterprises' (*wenhua hezuo shiye* [文化合作事業]) between the two countries. 'Cultural cooperation' in the document was broadly defined; it included, unsurprisingly, exchanges between religious figures (primarily Buddhists but also Muslims) and academics, translations of major published works into Chinese and Indian languages, and the gifting of books. The Education Ministry, the Chinese Buddhist Association, and Dai Jitao's New Asia Society were to plan study tours and goodwill missions along with China's

major universities and research institutes. Yet, cultural exchange also encompassed industry and agriculture. Industrial development was a major concern for Nehru (1942: 6–9), who showed great interest in the cooperative movement sponsored by left-leaning foreigners in China to spur production in the largely agrarian hinterland. In addition, under the umbrella of culture, China was to receive intelligence (*qingbao* [情報]) from the Congress through the state-run Central News Agency's new bureaus in Calcutta and Bombay (now Mumbai). Even more revealingly, the KMT was also to send observers, under other guises, to the next session of the Indian National Congress. All these connections were to be managed by the Sino-Indian Cultural Society.⁷

As it transpired, Sino-Indian or, more precisely, KMT–Congress engagement departed slightly from the original plan. In February 1942, during his visit to India, Chiang Kai-shek enquired about implementation of the outline with Zhu Jiahua, who reported that the Sino-Indian Cultural Society had yet to be reorganized on a scale that allowed it to steer the wheel of diplomacy between the two countries. Various ministries and the KMT's propaganda department, Zhu added, were supposed to follow up on the outline, but progress was slow. The Central News Agency bureaus were still on the drawing board. Planning for exchanges between academics, students, and industrialists had likewise stalled because, among other reasons, Congress leaders such as Nehru were in prison. He urged Chiang to put pressure on relevant ministries to expedite implementation of the 1939 outline, taking advantage of renewed interest in improving Sino-Indian relations stimulated by Chiang's visit. The Sino-Indian Cultural Society, Zhu assured Chiang, would be reinforced with Dai Jitao's contributions.⁸ The society, and particularly its India chapter, was finally reorganized in 1943; Nehru and Gandhi became honorary presidents along with Chiang, his wife, and Dai. It is not clear, however, if the organization's capacity received a real boost. The revamped society, British India's China Relations Officer Humphrey Prideaux-Brune (1886–1979) observed, was 'doubtless little more than the usual paper scheme—"name without substance"'. Apparently, Tan had nominated the career diplomat to the Society's Central Committee without the latter's knowledge.⁹

The 'cultural' exchanges the KMT did put together were significant and had Tan's fingerprints all over them. In 1939, leading Buddhist

monk Taixu visited India on a trip organized by the KMT's propaganda department (*xuanchuan bu* [宣傳部]) to garner support for the anti-Japanese war. In appearance, however, the tour was a Chinese Buddhist Association initiative. 'It is likely', according to historian Tansen Sen (2016: 308), 'that Taixu's itinerary in India and his meetings with Indian political leaders, visits to Buddhist sites and lectures may have all been arranged by Tan, who had recently returned from China where he was involved in organizing anti-Japanese propaganda activities. It is also possible that Tan was the one who instigated the Goodwill Mission in the first place.' What is clear is that Tan accompanied Taixu, of whom the lay Buddhist was a disciple, throughout the trip and hosted him at Cheena Bhavana. Choosing Buddhism to channel communications between the Chinese elite and Indian anti-colonialists was provided with a convenient guise, as anticipated during Nehru's Chongqing trip. The Sino-Indian Cultural Society, after all, was supposed to 'strictly keep away from any political movement' (Santiniketan Press 1943: 5). Buddhism, in addition, was one of the society's core concerns and led to conduits of funding for Cheena Bhavana (Sen 2017: 309). While its teaching and research programmes encompassed history, philosophy, literature, and other religions, Buddhism—in particular, translations of the canon into Chinese, Sanskrit, and other Indian languages—took pride of place (Tan 1957: 20–1). The fact that Buddhism spread from the Indian subcontinent through Tibet and took root in China and northeast Asia gave concrete expression to pan-Asian values. It exemplified the ecumenical, morally profound spiritualism that Tagore and his Chinese admirers had, since the Great War, held to be Eastern civilization's timely contribution to a rapacious modernity. It was 'the urgent duty of our Buddhistic [*sic*] countries', Tan declared (1938a: 16–18), with India also in mind, 'to make more efforts than ever for a universal propaganda and for a cosmopolitan salvation.' It was crucial for Westerners, cognizant of 'the frailty of modern life', to appreciate 'the great wisdom, learning, virtue, courage, charity, and the great mercy of Buddhism' (Tan 1938a: 16–18). Tan took a swipe at suave Japanese who were capable of claiming Chinese Buddhism as their own. Despite the universalism that Buddhist civilization implied, Chinese Buddhist leaders such as Taixu complained that Japanese Buddhists

were too tolerant of, if not complicit in, their country's encroachment into the Asian continent (Sen 2016: 307; Xue 2005: 77–82). War against Japan meant that Asianist civilizational discourse was no longer just an intellectual movement or the basis of anti-colonial solidarity but a contested terrain between two nation-states.

The most ardent advocate of pan-Asianism in the Nationalist government, lay Buddhist Dai Jitao, was unsurprisingly embroiled in the highly politicized religious exchanges between China and India. In late 1940, he followed Taixu in making what Tansen Sen (2016: 307) has aptly called a political pilgrimage on a trip 'under Chiang Kai-shek's personal planning and direction'. Billed as a 'distinguished Buddhist scholar', Dai visited famed religious sites such as Bodh Gaya, Kusinara, Lumbini, and Rajgir, as well as Allahabad (now Prayagraj), where the Indian National Congress was headquartered. The Congress's message welcoming Dai to Swaraj Bhavan appealed explicitly to common, if less than obvious, cultural ties between China and India: 'Today though the majority of our people are not officially called Buddhists but Hindus, yet they have incorporated this great doctrine in their ancient faith.' Responding to Dai's 'endorsement to the movement of non-violence as a basis for permanent world peace', Congress looked forward to bringing about 'in the east a bloc of free nations and thus bring about a new order'.¹⁰ The reciprocal Asianist sentiments were palpable. Equally obvious was Tan Yunshan's role in mediating Dai and the Congress leadership. Tan partook in Dai's pilgrimage to Buddhist sites and to Allahabad, ostensibly as an interpreter, but he oversaw the latter's itinerary, at least insofar as it involved the Congress.¹¹ Dai's visit, in Tan's recollection, followed the model of seamless fusion between politics and cultural pursuits that the Cheena Bhavana director had established. The main purpose of Dai's trip, according to Tan (1948a: iv–v), was innocuous, being intended merely to 'pay a cordial visit to Gurudeva Tagore ... and to specifically enquire about his illness'. Writing in 1947, however, Tan did not hesitate to highlight Dai's politics, which was opposed to 'Marxian materialism' and 'based on the traditional values of Chinese philosophy and culture'. Dai's intellectual, heavyweight role as a party 'draftsman' was compared to Nehru's role in the Congress (Tan 1948a: iv–v).

Chiang's Landmark Visit: Blending Pan-Asianism and Geopolitics

Da's India visit anticipated Chiang's in February 1942, although the latter was undoubtedly made not in any semi-official basis but as representative of China and the Allied powers. Historian Yang Tianshi (2010: 324) wrote that Chiang Kai-shek, due to his sympathy for the Indian freedom movement, had been consistent in adopting a 'pro-Indian, anti-British' (*fu Yin fan Ying* [輔印反英]) policy. The generalissimo's position was, in fact, more complicated. Chiang's visit followed hard on the heels of the beginning of the Pacific War in December 1940, under which China's war of resistance against Japan was subsumed. The Great East Asian War (Dai Tōa sensō [大東亞戰爭]), as the Japanese called its military crusade to supplant Anglo-American dominance in Asia, was embraced by some beyond Japan as a showdown between 'Yellow' and 'White' races (Saaler and Szpilman 2011: 26–7). The Nationalist government's challenge was to come up with an alternative to the Japanese empire's anti-Western rhetoric without actively challenging the interests of its more powerful allies. It appealed to Sino-Indian solidarity, drawing on historical ties and the anti-colonial nationalism that the KMT cadres shared with their Congress counterparts. At the same time, Chiang was wary of giving credence to Indian activists who wanted an immediate end to British rule and might allow Japan to expand into South Asia.

The civilizational romance that Cheena Bhavana forged between India and China featured prominently during the visit. It was, as Tan (1957: 32) boasted, the only place on the generalissimo's itinerary aside from those in New Delhi. In fact, Chiang, his wife, and entourage also went to India's boundary region with Afghanistan, reviewing military facilities there and meeting indigenous leaders. He was also meant to pay a visit to Gandhi in his base at Wardha but decided to change this plan due to opposition from British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Viceroy of India Lord Linlithgow (Zhou 2011: 299–300).¹² It was remarkable nonetheless that the Chinese leader should drop by an institution with such solid ties to the Congress elite. The symbolism attached to this particular leg of Chiang's itinerary, the only one Nehru joined, was difficult to miss. More important, though, was the discursive ground that had been laid by the

Sino-Indian Cultural Society and Cheena Bhavana, which Chiang exploited in his engagement with Congress leaders. On his way to Santiniketan, Chiang called on Gandhi at his Calcutta residence, where the Chinese visitor stayed for five hours. Early on in their talk, Chiang tapped into Tan's assertion that the Chinese public had an intense emotional connection with Gandhi and Tagore. 'The concern revolutionary comrades at the Chinese Nationalist Party have for your health', Chiang confided to his interlocutor, 'is no less earnest than that shown toward our late Premier', that is, Sun Yat-sen.¹³ It was only after this expression of affection that Chiang got down to business and asked Gandhi if he was waiting for Japanese and German intervention to free India from colonial rule. Responding to Gandhi's complaint that Anglo-American democracy was deceptive and no more trustworthy than the Japanese, Chiang launched into a long defence of Asianist solidarity:

We yellow people must seek liberation with our own methods ... Japan is predatory by nature; we would be repeating previous mistakes if we placed hope on it to liberate Eastern nations. For the many centuries since the Tang dynasty, each Chinese dynasty had seen invasion by Japan. However, while the boundary between China and India is as much as three thousand kilometers and exchange between us two countries had lasted for more than two thousand years, there was only cultural and economic connections without any incidence of mutual aggression.¹⁴

Chiang's eulogy to Sino-Indian unique commitment to peace could well have been delivered by Nehru or Tagore. At Cheena Bhavana's opening ceremony, both men celebrated the amity between the two ancient civilizations and compared them to Western and Westernized nation-states. Amidst 'this modern world of head-hunting and cannibalism', Tagore maintained that Indians and Chinese led human civilization in the altruistic exchange of spiritual and cultural gifts (Tan 1957: 44).

In Santiniketan, Chiang meticulously rehashed the idealized communion of peoples as projected on to Cheena Bhavan and, by extension, China and India. This gesture echoed the first thing Chiang did on arrival at Visva-Bharati on 19 February 1942—pay homage to the recently deceased Tagore (Zhou 2011: 347). At the reception, Chiang

compared Sun Yat-sen to Tagore, suggesting that the professional revolutionary was somehow as committed to spiritual uplift of the nation and humankind as the Nobel laureate. He then alluded, not too subtly, to Tagore's characterization of Sino-Indian relations as disinterested and uncorrupted by material calculations: 'I have brought nothing from China to offer you but the warmth of my heart and the good wishes of our people' (Tan 1957: 49). As it transpired, however, along with his people's good wishes Chiang presented INR 50,000 for a Tagore memorial and another INR 30,000 for Cheena Bhavana. Tinged with monetary transaction or not, the Protestant statesman was, of course, not in India as a religious pilgrim but to garner support for China's war efforts from the British colonial authorities and anti-colonial nationalists alike. As he told his underlings, the meeting with Gandhi the day before was a great disappointment:

[Gandhi] languished under British rule, and his heart became as hard as iron and rock [*tieshi xinchang* (鐵石心腸)]. He only loves India and cares not about the world and the rest of humankind. He is most hardhearted [*renxin ji* (忍心極)]! This attitude is probably informed by Indian philosophy and traditional spirit and not worthy of revolutionary leaders. Yet, only Gandhi and his heart were appropriate for dealing with the British and the British alone. (Zhou 2011: 349–50)

On the Calcutta-bound train from Santiniketan, Chiang complained to Nehru that the latter did not pay enough attention to diplomacy and developments outside India (Zhou 2011: 350). Instead of universalism, India's cultural traditions were leading to insularity at the Allies' expense. Chiang's anxiety over the Congress's unwillingness to aid China's defence by tempering its anti-British campaign showed shrewd geopolitical calculations behind public confessions of mutual love and beautifully articulated visions of a conflict-free world.

The tension between Chiang's realism, typical of politicians presiding over established nation-states, and his professed sympathy for nationalist movements outside China was well appreciated by the Chinese commentariat, or at least that part of it that was close to the state. On 16 February, the Central News Agency reported that India was critical because its unexploited industrial capacity could be transformed into the British Empire's arsenal and become a reliable supplier of arms to China as well (Anonymous 1942: 8). The famed

writer and translator Liang Shiqiu (梁實秋) (1903–87) warned, while also echoing the point about India's growing industrial prowess, that the Japanese were already on the doorstep of South Asia after the fall of Singapore. Yet, Indians were not predisposed against Japan. Tagore's *Nationalism* (1917) was popular in Japan, and Japanese pan-Asianism was music to many Indian ears. 'If in response to the Japanese threat the Indians were to practise Ahimsa', Liang (1942: 3–5) warned, 'India could well see a new master.' In the context of wartime geopolitics, the non-violent philosophy that Tan saw implied in Chinese Buddhism and Gandhism and touted as beaconing an alternative to Western colonial exploitation turned into a tacit embrace of Japanese aggression. The differences between Chiang's wartime strategy and Nehru's were laid bare in the two men's conversation after their brief stay in Santiniketan. Nehru confessed that if the Congress were to actively contribute to the Allies' war efforts, the Indian populace could see it as collaborating with the British colonizers. The best China could hope for in the event of Japanese encroachment onto India would be non-violent resistance on Congress's part. Chiang was not at all impressed by a non-violent response to Japan and explicitly urged Nehru to reject this Gandhian strategy. Only by fully cooperating with China in the global strategy against the Axis powers could India secure its own national liberation. As for Nehru's concern for the Congress's popularity in India, Chiang responded tartly, 'We who committed ourselves to revolutions would not care to sacrifice ourselves as long as we could help others.'¹⁵ Yet, it was precisely the actual processes of revolution-making and nation-building that began to pull Chinese nationalists and their Indian counterparts apart. Whatever convergence the ideals of Tagore and Nehru might have enjoyed with Sun and Dai could not be neatly hypostatized as diplomacy.

'Culture' under Scrutiny

With more frequent interactions between the KMT and Congress leadership, Tan's claim that his activities in India were above politics came under even greater scrutiny by Raj officers in both New Delhi and Calcutta. An intelligence report in 1940 observed that 'Censors in Calcutta' had kept a close eye on the communications between

Tan, Dai Jitao, and Chen Lifu. Tan's activities, the report found, were subsidized by the KMT's propaganda department.¹⁶ The latter stage of the Pacific War saw the China chapter of the Sino-Indian Cultural Society raise funds for flood relief in Bengal, while scholars in India extolled the virtues of the New Life Movement and translated Chiang's 1943 treatise, *Zhongguo zhi mingyun* (中國之命運) [*China's Destiny*] into Hindi (Nair 1942: 42–3; Tan 1957: 24). While culture for Tan no doubt encompassed the thoughts and even actions of politicians—nationalist leaders did not just embody partisan ideologies but were sages propelling civilizational renaissance in the East and even the entire humankind—others saw culture as no more than a front for political activism. Colonial officials in New Delhi struggled to situate Tan Yunshan and the Sino-Indian Cultural Society within the context of Nationalist Chinese manoeuvres in India. In 1943, as a result of Chiang's prompting and at the British Raj's invitation, an educational mission was dispatched to India. The mission focused Delhi's attention on previous Chinese visitors. Remarkably, none of the British-Indian officials who dealt with China were heretofore familiar with what Olaf Caroe (1892–1981), the top diplomat in the Raj, called China's 'Shantiniketan connection'.¹⁷ In a note dated 18 February, Humphrey Prideaux-Brix (1886–1979), who had just taken up the position of China Relations Officer in India after various diplomatic appointments in China, confessed that he had had no knowledge of Tan Yunshan or the Sino-Indian Cultural Society until recently. Apart from noting the sponsorship of Dai Jitao ('a rather shadowy personage') and Zhu Jiahua ('not popular'), the old China Hand drew attention to the society's non-political self-identity. If the society were genuinely apolitical, Delhi might well consider leveraging it to its own advantage.¹⁸

Soon enough, the Raj realized that culture and politics were not separable, or at least not in a way that colonial officials felt reassuring, in Santiniketan. A September 1942 letter that Tan sent to Dai was understood by the Intelligence Bureau as indicating that the Society was, for some Chinese officials, at least, 'a cover for political activity'.¹⁹ Tan himself, Prideaux-Brune found out, had 'strayed from the straight and narrow path', presiding over a gathering at Visva-Bharati in support of Gandhi's fast on 11 February 1943.²⁰ The fifteen-day ordeal, which the Mahatma launched as a protest in the aftermath of

the Quit India Movement, proved too sensitive for Tan to be associated with, albeit marginally. At the end of the fast, Tan travelled to Pune, where Gandhi had been placed under house arrest, to attend a thanksgiving meeting. He was at the multi-faith event as a Buddhist, in which tradition he offered prayers, while the British Quaker Horace Alexander (1889–1989) read from the Bible.²¹ For colonial officials, Tan's well-advertised sympathy for Gandhi was clearly provocative. Their frustration stemmed from the impression that Tan's actions were those not only of a pious Buddhist but of the leader of a body backed by the Chinese government. It is for this reason that New Delhi requested the Chinese commissioner Shen Shihua (b. 1900) to, as the 'demi-official letter' put it, 'fortify [Tan] ... to eschew all political activity'.²² The fact that Shen agreed to ask the head of the educational mission to India, a vice minister of education, to admonish Tan no doubt confirmed suspicions that the Sino-Indian Cultural Society was connected to, if not a front for, the Nationalist regime.²³

The Santiniketan connection, External Affairs Department officials quickly concluded, was anathema. Tan's broad definition of culture, with its repudiation of Euro-American modernity and vision for a universal order drawn from Asian historical experiences, translated easily into sympathies for political figures. Imaginings of Eastern civilizational renaissance were potentially useful for Chiang's government, which had to juggle its identity as a nationalist revolutionary movement with its commitments to the established international system. For British-Indian bureaucrats, however, Tan's dabbling in oppositional politics was undesirable, if not downright subversive. Cultural relations organized out of Chongqing and Santiniketan were too much based on the 'Kuomintang–Congress Axis'.²⁴ Tan Yunshan, Cheena Bhavana, and the Sino-Indian Cultural Society were thus situated in the context of Nationalist cosiness with the Congress. The secretary to the Raj's envoy in China suggested in 1942 that

The Chinese ... appear to be very sentimental. The equation of the Congress party with the Kuomintang, and suggestions that the Congress is revolutionary tend when taken together to intensify their feeling for the Congress. They are very proud of their own revolutionary history although they would not care for flattering references to the revolutionary spirit of the Chinese communists!²⁵

Misguided affection for the Congress, he continued, stemmed from Chinese anti-foreignism—their relish in embarrassing the British—and ‘from this it [was] an easy step to a sort of pan-Asiatic feeling’.²⁶ Chiang Kai-shek and the China he led, British-Indian officials observed, without a shred of irony, had an imperialistic impulse.²⁷ British understanding of Nationalist outreach to the Congress was almost a mirror image of how Chiang portrayed Japanese pleas to pan-Asianist sentiments in Tokyo’s attempt to appropriate Indian nationalism (Zhou 2011: 341).

To be sure, Tan was not exactly a threat to British rule. Prideaux-Brune concluded, after accompanying the Chinese educational mission to Santiniketan, that Cheena Bhavana was ‘a dead-or-alive affair’ and that the Sino-Indian Cultural Society, which apparently included him in its stellar list of central committee members, was ‘little more than the usual paper scheme’.²⁸ As for Tan, Prideaux-Brune attributed his political involvement to difficulties in sustaining meaningful Sino-Indian cultural intercourse, given his low intellectual calibre and unfavourable location.²⁹ Prideaux-Brune’s portrayal of Tan demonstrated an inadequate grasp of either Tan’s long-standing association with Indian nationalist leaders or the ways in which his devotion to cultural communion between China and India naturally intersected with nationalist politics. Regardless, the consensus among British-Indian diplomats was that the Santiniketan connection should be sidelined. A proposal calling for the establishment of Sino-Indian institutions, managed by the New Delhi-based Inter-University Board (of which Visva-Bharati was not a part), to coordinate cultural exchanges between the two countries, was mooted. Yet, probably due to its sensitivity, the idea was not raised with the Chinese educational mission.³⁰ The delegation was already confronted with the possibility that the donations Chiang committed to Cheena Bhavana during his 1942 visit might not result in new facilities because of the Indian government’s wartime policy of withholding steel and cement from non-essential projects.³¹ The agent general for India in China, K.P.S. Menon (1898–1982), communicated with Prideaux-Brune and agreed that the latter should ignore the invitation to join the central committee of the Sino-Indian Cultural Society in India. Menon himself showed ‘polite but no means undue interest’ when meeting with the society’s president,

Zhu Jiahua, and other officers such as the 'Oxford man' and budding translator Yang Xianyi (楊憲益) (1915–2009).³²

In terms of its capacity for training Sinologists, Cheena Bhavana would perhaps soon be eclipsed if similar departments were sponsored by the Raj at the universities of Calcutta or Delhi. Prideaux-Brune described Cheena Bhavana—occupying 'the only quite unattractive building in Shantiniketan—as a sorry place where Tan and his associates conducted amateurish teaching and research in Chinese language and Buddhism with very limited resources'.³³ In fact, according to Tansen Sen (2017: 307), Cheena Bhavana remained until the late 1950s 'the leading global center for India-China studies'. Its scholarly achievements regardless, the primary significance of Cheena Bhavana lay not in its academic prowess, nor even in that of its director. The experiment was important, instead, for being an institutional articulation of a civilizational ideal, a vision of Asianist unity that was supposed to overcome the violence, avarice, and mutual suspicion that beset humanity carved up into nation-states and divided into subjects pursuing material interests. Even as both Rabindranath Tagore and Tan Yunshan assiduously sought financial support from the Chinese state, there is no reason to suggest that Santiniketan was designed to become a base for political agitation.

Nonetheless, it was also true that Cheena Bhavana was embroiled in wartime nationalist politics and great power diplomacy, despite its transcendental vision. First, the Sino-Indian Cultural Society, which originated as the conduit of funds for the new Sinological unit, was identified as a front for collaboration between the Nationalists and the Congress. Second, Tan actively helped organize the visit of Dai Jitao and contributed to that of Chiang Kai-shek. On the latter occasion in particular, appeals to humanistic culture coexisted with unsentimental realpolitik calculations. Finally, even as he insisted on being above politics, Tan's admiration for Gandhi rendered Cheena Bhavana an anathema to the British colonial officials, who already harboured suspicions of Chinese support for the Congress movement. Tan did not ask to be involved in political machinations, but his cultural agenda eased him into the political realm.³⁴ As an institution,

wartime contingencies brought Cheena Bhavana attention and new injections of funds. Convergence, as I argue elsewhere (Tsui 2018: 157–9), was the modus operandi of how Nationalist government and Chinese liberal intellectuals interacted with one another. While Tan had never embraced liberalism and was attracted more to Gandhism, he most probably shared with contemporaries, such as Hu Shi (胡適) (1891–1962), Jiang Tingfu (蔣廷黻) (1895–1965), and Zhu Guangqian (朱光潛) (1897–1986), discomfort with the strictures the Nationalist government imposed on society. The Nationalist approach to governing China was anathema to the free-wheeling informality that characterized *Visva-Bharati*. Yet, there was enough common ground between intellectuals such as Tan and the Nationalist state, given their common animosity to class struggle, foreign threats, and a shared desire to craft a world freed from colonial capitalism, to bind them together. That Tan more than welcomed funding from China to keep Cheena Bhavana afloat and that the Nationalist state appreciated Santiniketan as an unofficial but highly symbolic diplomatic site rendered academic culture and state politics inextricable.

It was also the dynamics of the Pacific War that brought into sharp relief the limitations besetting Tan's notion that Sino-Indian amity was based on exchange not of strategic interests between political actors but of goodwill between cultures. In spite of what they professed publicly, Nationalist leaders in China saw their Congress counterparts as, at best, difficult allies. Despite sharing the predicament of being threatened by imperialist powers, the two nationalist parties obviously had different views on how to deliver their countries from colonialism. While partaking in the desire to refashion an Asia-centric future, Chiang effectively asked Congress leaders to suspend India's struggle against British colonialism. Finally, given Cheena Bhavana's increasing involvement mediating the interactions between the Nationalists and the Congress, its claims to be a body set above state politics became increasingly untenable, and its catholic definition of culture was questioned, not the least by the British colonial state governing India. This last dilemma was not to be resolved with British colonizers' withdrawal in 1947; instead, Cheena Bhavana became ever more entangled in state diplomacy with India becoming an independent nation-state and China soon being torn between two governments in Beijing and Taipei, locked in Cold War confrontation. Tan Yunshan's decision to befriend

the Chinese Communist government was probably informed by the same optimism that culture could transcend the state power that be, but it was definitely not brought about by any cosmopolitan, humane order that inspired Chinese intellectuals disillusioned with European-style geopolitical rivalries in the aftermath of the Great War.

Notes

1. For Tucci, see Bevacides (1995). Recent works on Andrews include Visvanathan (2007: 62–80).
2. Rabindranath Tagore to Lin Sen, 28 September 1934, Nationalist Government Collection, 001000006256A, Academia Historica, Taipei, Taiwan.
3. The original proposal called for an exchange of scholars, including Liang Qichao, between Visva-Bharati and Beijing-based universities. Funding for a guest house was to come from Jugal Kishore Birla (1883–1967), an industrialist who supported Gandhi and the Congress (Tan [1942] 1998).
4. Intelligence Bureau note, ‘Sino-Indian Cultural Society or Association’, 22 February 1943, External Affairs Department Collection, 135(8)-X/43, National Archives of India, New Delhi, India; ‘Report of a Secret Agent dated 13.7.40’, 13 July 1940, File no. 468/39(4), Serial no. 628-40, West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata, India. See also Tan (1957: 18–19).
5. ‘Bolata jiang “Yindu geming shi”’ (勃拉塔講「印度革命史」) [‘Pratap on the “Indian Revolution”’], 25 November 1927, general files, 436/119.9, Kuomintang Archives, Taipei, Taiwan; see also Deepak (2001: 78).
6. Chen Lifu and Zhu Jiahua to Chiang Kai-shek, 6 October 1939, special files, 13/1.2, Kuomintang Archives, Taipei, Taiwan.
7. Zhu Jiahua to Chiang Kai-shek, 17 February 1942, Nationalist Government Collection, 001000006307A, Academia Historica, Taipei, Taiwan; ‘Zhong-Yin wenhua hezuo dagang’ (中印文化合作大綱) [‘Outlines on Sino-Indian Cultural Cooperation’], 6 October 1939, special files, 13/1.3, Kuomintang Archives, Taipei, Taiwan.
8. Zhu Jiahua to Chiang Kai-shek, 17 February 1942, Nationalist Government Collection, 001000006307A, Academia Historica, Taipei, Taiwan.
9. Humphrey Prideux-Brune to Hugh Weightman, 17 April 1943, External Affairs Department Collection, 329-X/43 (Secret), National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.
10. Da’s speech in Allahabad, 3 December 1940; Congress’s message on Da’s visit, undated, All India Congress Committee (AICC) Collection, G40/1940, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, India.

11. Tan to Nehru, 10 October 1940; J.B. Kripalani to Congress Provincial Committees, 28 October 1940, G40/2075; Nehru to Kripalani, 28 October 1940, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, India.
12. Churchill to Chiang, 12 February 1942, Nationalist Government Collection, 001000000375A, Academia Historica, Taipei, Taiwan.
13. Transcript of Chiang's conversation with Gandhi, 18 February 1942, Nationalist Government Collection, 002000000375A, Academia Historica, Taipei, Taiwan.
14. Transcript of Chiang's conversation with Gandhi, 18 February 1942, Nationalist Government Collection, 002000000375A, Academia Historica, Taipei, Taiwan.
15. Transcript of Chiang's conversation with Nehru, 20 February 1942, Nationalist Government Collection, 002000000375A, Academia Historica, Taipei, Taiwan.
16. 'Report of a Secret Agent dated 13.7.40', 13 July 1940, File no. 468/39(4), Serial no. 628-40, West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata, India
17. Olaf Caroe's comments on education adviser to the Government of India's report on the Chinese educational mission's visit to India, 15 June 1943, External Affairs Department Collection, 329-X/43 (Secret), National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.
18. Prideaux-Brune's response to Hugh Weightman, 18 February 1943, External Affairs Department Collection, 329-X/43 (Secret), National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.
19. 'Sino-Indian Cultural Society of Association,' Intelligence Bureau, Government of India, undated, External Affairs Department Collection, 329-X/43 (Secret), National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.
20. Notes written by Prideaux-Brune, 22 February 1943, External Affairs Department Collection, 329-X/43 (Secret), National Archives of India, New Delhi, India. Intelligence agents in West Bengal were much blunter in describing Tan as someone working for the Chinese government under the innocuous guise of cultural activities (Sen 2017: 320).
21. Intelligence Bureau newspaper clipping, 'Thanksgiving Day for Mr Gandhi', 5 March 1943, External Affairs Department Collection, 329-X/43 (Secret), National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.
22. Weightman to Shen, 24 February 1943; Weightman to Prideaux-Brune, 24 March 1943, External Affairs Department Collection, 329-X/43 (Secret), National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.
23. Weightman to Shen, 24 February 1943; Weightman to Prideaux-Brune, 24 March 1943, External Affairs Department Collection, 329-X/43 (Secret), National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.
24. Olaf Caroe's comments on the education adviser to the government of India's report on the Chinese educational mission's visit to India, 15

- June 1943, External Affairs Department Collection, 329-X/43 (Secret), National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.
25. H.E. Richardson to A.S.B. Khan, undated, External Affairs Department Collection, 159X(P)/1942 (Secret), National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.
 26. H.E. Richardson to A.S.B. Khan, undated, External Affairs Department Collection, 159X(P)/1942 (Secret), National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.
 27. H.E. Richardson to A.S.B. Khan, undated; Appendix written by P.D. Butler, 17 September 1942, External Affairs Department Collection, 159X(P)/1942 (Secret), National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.
 28. Prideaux-Brune to Weightman, 17 April 1943, External Affairs Department Collection, 329-X/43 (Secret), National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.
 29. Prideaux-Brune to Weightman, 17 April 1943, External Affairs Department Collection, 329-X/43 (Secret), National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.
 30. Extract from notes of discussions between the educational adviser to the Indian government and members of the Chinese Educational Mission during their visit to India in 1943, 3 June 1943, External Affairs Department Collection, 329-X/43 (Secret), National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.
 31. Release of certain materials for the completion of buildings of the Cheena Bhavana, External Affairs Department Collection, 135(8)-X/43, National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.
 32. Menon to Weightman, 1 December 1943, External Affairs Department Collection, 329-X/43 (Secret), National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.
 33. Prideaux-Brune to Weightman, 17 April 1943, External Affairs Department Collection, 329-X/43 (Secret), National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.
 34. The only evidence suggesting that Tan had political ambitions is a 14 May 1940 letter, intercepted and translated into English by censors in Calcutta (File no. 468/39[4]), Serial no. 628–40, West Bengal State Archives), in which Chen Lifu responded to Tan's request to be involved in unspecified 'political work'.

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