

Self-presentation

ASIENHAUS / Asia House and the German Asia Foundation

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Self-presentation of the Asienhaus and the German Asia Foundation taken from their website October 4, 2005.

Contents

- [Asia House - General Informati](#)
- [German Asia Foundation](#)

Asia House - General Information

For a Better Understanding of the Asian Region

The largest part of humanity lives in Asia. East and Southeast Asia are currently experiencing enormous economic growth. The 21st century is already being called the "Asia-Pacific Century". As the economic importance of the region grows, so does its political importance. No global problem will be solved without this region's contribution.

At the same time the majority of the world's poor are Asians. The region is suffering from massive environmental destruction, and the social problems of the rapid economic development are obvious. Human rights violations are widespread, and minorities are oppressed.

Currently Germany's booming interest in Asia is reduced to export promotion or tourism. Opportunities for information and exchange are limited and only superficially refer to the political, social and cultural realities of Asia's societies. Intercultural dialogue has only just begun. Without deeper consideration of the development in Asian societies and their historical conditions the perception of Asia will remain superficial.

The German Asia Foundation aspires to contribute to a more diversified image of the countries and people of Asia and to promote the intercultural dialogue for peace and social justice on all levels. In many places civil societies are emerging, are struggling for democratic liberties and are no longer leaving the future of their countries to governments, generals and businessmen. Often they deal with the same problems that we are also facing. Not rarely, they find different answers to ours.

In Germany, these developments are widely ignored. But it is not only that Asia can learn from Europe, but also Europe that can learn from Asia. Thus we do not perceive intercultural exchange as a one-way street.

The Asia House

In 1995 the German Asia Foundation and its information offices moved together to adjust better to the changing framework of Asia-related development activities. The former administrative building of the "Zollverein" coal mine in Essen's Katernberg district changed into the Asia House. Not only the German Asia Foundation and its member offices found their new residence in this representative 1908 building, but it also offers enough space for other Asia-related groups and companies.

The Asia House intends to be a meeting place for people with different interests in Asia. Various groups of immigrants from Asian countries meet regularly in the Asia House. The Tamil Women's Group Essen, the German-Chinese Association Essen, the Union of Iranian Physicians and Dentists in Germany as well as »Fair Trade Essen, Inc. he Asia House.

Regular exhibitions of Asian art will make cultural developments in Asia better known. The Asia House exhibitions have started with modern Chinese paintings and political cartoons from the Indonesian opposition.

The Asia House offers two meeting rooms for public events as well as for meetings of the Asia Foundation, its member associations and other institutions. The Asia Foundation also offers regular Chinese language courses, possibly also for other languages in the near future.

German Asia Foundation

The German Asia Foundation was founded in 1992 to promote the dialogue with the countries of Asia and the Asians living here and to support the initiatives and organisations participating in it. It is politically and economically independent and works here as well as in Asia for human dignity and against oppression, for overcoming prejudices and the realization of social justice. It believes this is in the public interest - both here and in Asia. For the fulfilment of this task we have established the Asia House in Essen, opened in February 1995. The Asia House is the focus of the foundation's activities.

The current members of the German Asia Foundation are its founder, Professor Dr. Günter Freudenberg, the Korea Association, the Philippines Bureau, the South Asia Bureau, the Tibet Support Group Germany and the Association for Development Education about Southeast Asia. Their activities comprise publishing informations and campaigning on various issues, maintaining links between Germany and Asia and organising cultural and educational events that give the losers of the "Asian economic miracles" a voice. They advise and support Asian partners in their work on the basis of critical solidarity.

Through international networking with like-minded organisations and individuals they are making suppressed or ignored information "from below" accessible - information that is often sidestepped but is essential for a deeper understanding of the Asian region.

The German Asia Foundation integrates the forces of its members and understands itself as an open project still in emergence. We are still lacking an adequate representation of countries such as Japan, China or Taiwan that are not "classical" developing countries. The German Asia Foundation unites different experiences, contacts and knowledge. To this aid, we are inviting interested individuals, initiatives and institutions to support, join and cooperate with our member organisations.

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