

# Culture Mandala: The Bulletin of the Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies

The Bulletin of the Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies

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Volume 7 | Issue 1

Article 7

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December 2005

## Barcelona's Casa Asia

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### Recommended Citation

Dellios, Rosita (2005) "Barcelona's Casa Asia," *Culture Mandala: The Bulletin of the Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies*: Vol. 7: Iss. 1, Article 7.  
Available at: <http://epublications.bond.edu.au/cm/vol7/iss1/7>

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## Barcelona's Casa Asia

### **Abstract**

Extract:

Casa Asia - or Asia House - is a remarkable institution of East-West relations. Billed as the gateway to Asia and the Pacific in Spain, it also opens a vista of Catalonian splendour in its premises located on the famous Avinguda Diagonal in Barcelona. The Palau Baró de Quadras, a Modernist building designed by Puig i Cadafalch and classified as an Artistic and Historical Monument of National Interest, is the 'house' that acts as Casa Asia's headquarters.

### **Keywords**

Casa Asia, Barcelona City Council, Spain, lecture summary

*Culture Mandala, Vol. 7 no. 1, December 2005:*

## ***CENTRE REPORT:***

### ***Barcelona's Casa Asia***

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*East Meets West in Casa Asia's foyer*

Casa Asia was set up in 2001 by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Autonomous Government of Catalonia and Barcelona City Council to increase awareness of Asia in local society, and to strengthen the mutual awareness between Spain and the countries of the Asia-Pacific region.



*Beautifully Crafted Interiors*

To this end, Casa Asia acts as a point of contact and a forum for dialogue between Spain, Europe and the Asia-Pacific. It hosts public lectures, seminars, business meetings and forums, art exhibitions, and provides specialist information on the Asia-Pacific region. It can call on its resources of more than 5,000 publications, a sound archive and video library.

*Diverse (multi-lingual) AV Resources*

Among the lectures delivered in 2005 was one on China by Dr Rosita Dellios, of Bond University's *Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies*. She was invited in September to speak on the theme of 'China: The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Superpower?' (see summary below). The lecture at the Tagore Auditorium was extremely well attended with the audience ranging from university students to retirees. Simultaneous interpretation of her lecture into Spanish, and the subsequent question and answer session, ensured lively audience involvement. The citizens of Barcelona showed an interest and awareness of the importance of China as a rising power, highlighting Casa Asia's embedment in local community interest for its wider East-West engagement. The Casa Asia website is: <http://casaasia.net>

*Dr Dellios at Casa Asia****China: The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Superpower?***

## *- Lecture Summary*

- "China will, in all likelihood, be the first superpower to come of age in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. . . . The discernible conditions of the globalizing world and China's characteristics will shape the meaning of superpower as experienced in the present century."
- "China, inheritor of 5,000 years of civilisation, is also the world's fastest developing economy in the present age, having grown an average of 9.5% annually for the past 20 years. Such high growth rates, low labour costs and a huge emerging market, have attracted the world's highest levels of foreign direct investment (FDI)."
- "How attractive is a China that lost Confucianism to Communism, and is still trying to find its way back again to Confucian humanism without sacrificing the politics of control? To be a superpower requires not only capacity and willpower, but also legitimacy in the eyes of the world. Legitimacy, in turn, affects the reach of a superpower. Thus China may find legitimacy in Asia but not in the West, with its fears of China as a looming economic and military threat, as well as country that does not respect human rights in its domestic affairs. So long as China does not gain the respect of the West, it will remain only an East Asian regional power. It needs legitimacy to develop itself globally."
- "It may be argued that with its minimal deterrent force China is hardly a nuclear superpower to be taken seriously. On the other hand, China does have global reach - how many nuclear warheads are needed to constitute a threat and to be deemed a credible deterrent? Moreover, China's nuclear arsenal is not designed to compete (as occurred during the Cold War between the USSR and US in the accumulation of ever greater numbers and sophistication of nuclear warheads and delivery systems), but to deter threats to China. It does not have a strategic alliance system to defend or an umbrella under which allies shelter - as is the case with the US and its defence partners. Thus China can claim nuclear superpower status without arousing undue suspicion. The suspicion which it does arouse concerns Taiwan - and this is precisely what Beijing intends: to deter a Taiwanese bid for formal independence."
- "As China modernises and grows more connected with the global system, it will be compelled by its own internal logic and dynamism to instigate a shift in the international political system. Like the European Union, which found strength in pluralistic unity rather than fragmented sovereignties, China will soon be in a position to cross the threshold of an international system in which states are self-serving to the more Confucian view of 'self-cultivating' (in other words, 'self-civilising') in an interactive global system. The proverbial 'struggle for power' thus converts to 'networks of power'; it is now more profitable to connect than to clash. This ethos applies as much to civilisations as to states and their citizens."
- "In regard to China as a likely contender for 21<sup>st</sup> Century superpower status, the evidence is not only material, as seen in a prospering China with global economic reach. It is also civilisational - particularly the contribution of contemporary Confucian humanism to address human rights and the issues of values in global governance . . . There is a huge market for harmony and stability in the post 9/11 world. China can make a contribution in this respect, just as it had for 500 years before the spread of European political power on this planet."

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