

Negotiating Culture with Peking

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NEGOTIATING CULTURE WITH PEKING

Case Study by GERALD STRYKER

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SIXTEENTH SESSION

SENIOR SEMINAR IN FOREIGN POLICY

DEPARTMENT OF STATE



1973 - 74

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Cultural exchanges between China the U.S. have historically served an important role in opening China politically, economically, and culturally to the rest of the world and vice versa. Hitherto the "ping-pong diplomacy" of the U.S. table tennis team's visit to China in April of 1971, the U.S. made no overtures towards cultural exchanges or normalized diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China despite the PRC's engagement in various cultural activities with a number of other countries. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's trip to China in July 1971, followed by Richard Nixon's visit in 1972 heralded a thaw in US-China relations, beginning a policy of detente in which cultural exchanges between Washington and Beijing paved the way for warmer bilateral relations. More recently, China's global influence has steadily grown as evidenced by newly appointed leader, Xi Jinping's, recent meeting with President Obama this past June amidst a background of massive no-strings-attached economic investment and construction projects by China throughout the third-world, and its military's increasingly assertive presence throughout the Pacific.

This 1974 case study by Gerald Stryker describes China's cultural exchanges with the West in the areas of science, technology, culture, sports, and journalism by examining the differences in scale, type, benefit and reciprocity of exchange relative to its respective exchanges with the U.S., Canada, France, Sweden, and Britain, as well as what political-economic-cultural goals China seeks to achieve with such exchanges.

Stryker writes:

"China wants friends, especially, it must be admitted, friends who will look up to her. The Chinese want to 'show off' their cultural achievements through cultural exchange. They want to impress us, for they want us to respect them. They want admiring friends. Cultural exchange, therefore, is not, strictly speaking, the aim of their cultural exchange. The Chinese want people to come to China to see not to show, while they themselves want to go abroad to show not to see." [page 8]

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