

SEARCHING FOR THE TAO? REEXAMINING MODERN CHANGES IN ASIAN MANAGEMENT: CHARACTERISTICS AND SIGNIFICANCE

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ABSTRACT

Management styles are changing everywhere, with the emergence of “globalization.” Recently, Sing Ong Yu published a book, *The Art of Modern Oriental Management*, that compares Chinese, Japanese and Korean styles of management at work as they have been influenced by, and/or as they have cast influence upon, the West, at least arguably. This is cross-influence real? Evidenced by what empirical data, if any? In this paper, the authors will present salient facts, that predicated upon empirical data, gathered through their own participant observation in China, since 2001, in Taiwan since 2008, in Japan and the Republic of Korea, more recently. Four key factors will be addressed: core values, culture, philosophy, religion, studied individually and collectively, considering their impact on delegation and empowerment, expectation of loyalty, MacGregor’s “Theory X” and “Theory Y” and Ouchi’s “Theory Z”, plus competitive collaboration and/or confrontation and sabotage. Management styles change both forward and backwards, for better or worse, creating both value added and value subtracted. Part of this paper will attempt, to identify and articulate the changes evident in Asian and Western leadership styles compared, since Harvard University’s Alfred J. Weatherhead, Jr. Professor Daniel Quinn Mills published an article that has become seminal, “Asian and American Leadership Styles: How They Differ” (2007). Upon the arrival of Kong Tzu (Confucius) at a meeting with Lao Tzu (the founder of Taoism), the “Old Master” asked Kong Tzu: “Have you found the Tao?” That question remains outstanding 2500 years afterwards, particularly in 21st century Asian private sector management. What, if anything has been found to better understand where East meets West in leadership or management in the last decade? What characteristics, if any, of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism or other ethical, philosophical or religious roots remain core, to modern Asian leadership and management? What “Western” approaches, if any, have become Key Success Factors (KSFs) in Asian business management? What “Eastern” approaches, if any, have become KSFs in Western business management?

KEYWORDS: Asian Management, Competitive Collaboration, China, Japan, Korea, Leadership, Tao