

The Main Framework of Ancient Chinese Management Thought from the Perspective of Traditional Culture

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Abstract. Ancient Chinese management philosophy is an important component of traditional Chinese culture, reflecting the thinking and summary of management practices by ancient Chinese people. This article summarizes the core viewpoints of major schools of thought such as Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism from the perspective of traditional culture, as well as their implications for modern management. Through in-depth exploration of ancient management ideas, we can better understand the values and management concepts of traditional Chinese culture, and provide inspiration and reference for contemporary management practices.

Keywords: Traditional culture; Ancient management ideas; Management inspiration.

1. Introduction

China is an ancient civilization with a long history, carrying thousands of years of cultural accumulation. The ancient management philosophy of China is an important component of traditional Chinese culture, which has condensed the thinking and summary of management practices by the Chinese people for thousands of years. Although a specialized management discipline was not formed at that time, the essence of management thinking was rooted in various cultural schools. Among the various schools of thought, Confucianism, Taoism, Mohism, Legalism, and the Military School of Thought are particularly outstanding. Among them, Confucianism emphasizes the construction and optimization of organizational structure, Mohism emphasizes the setting and achievement of goals, the Military School excels in decisive and rapid decision-making, Taoism emphasizes the nature and inaction of leadership art, and Legalism emphasizes the strictness and effectiveness of control mechanisms. Among them, Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism are particularly popular and have developed particularly maturely, forming the main framework of ancient Chinese management thought. The ideas of these schools together demonstrate the breadth and diversity of ancient Chinese management thought. This article will explore the core viewpoints and contemporary management practices of Confucianism, Taoism, and jurisprudence from the perspective of traditional culture, in order to provide new ideas and insights for contemporary management practices.

2. Confucian management philosophy

As one of the hundred schools of thought among the pre Qin philosophers, Confucianism has been applied to the world and has been passed down to this day, embedded in the flesh and blood of Chinese civilization. Confucianism was first established as a philosophical theoretical system represented by Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi, which includes values such as self-cultivation, academic studies, and etiquette, as well as the key principles of monarchy and governance. Its theory is built on the understanding and thinking of people.

3. Confucian management ideology system

Confucian management philosophy is a management ideology system that puts people first, emphasizes moral cultivation and ethical norms.

3.1. Putting people first

In "Mencius: Devotion", "the people are precious, followed by the state, and the ruler is light" emphasizes the core position of human beings in governing the country. In management activities, we should respect human values, pay attention to human needs, stimulate human potential, and promote organizational progress with the goal of comprehensive human development.

3.2. Rule of virtue comes first

In the Analects of Confucius, "governing with virtue, such as in the North Star, where one resides and all the stars share it." It emphasizes the importance of a manager's moral cultivation for successful management. The idea of putting rule of virtue first requires managers to influence and manage others through moral cultivation and exemplary role, and to use the power of morality to unite people's hearts and promote the development of their careers.

3.3. The Doctrine of the Mean

The Doctrine of the Mean proposes the idea of "neutrality", pursuing balance and coordination, avoiding extremism and bias, in order to maintain organizational stability and development. Confucianism pursues social harmony and stability, believing that management should pursue internal and external harmony within the organization, and achieve organizational stability and development by reconciling various interest relationships.

4. Inspiration for management

4.1. The Concept of Rites and Music and Management Practice

In today's fast-paced and high-pressure business environment, the Confucian concept of ritual and music management provides us with a thinking path to address challenges and establish a strong organizational culture. The concept of ritual and music not only originates from ancient Chinese cultural traditions, but also contains rich management wisdom. Firstly, the concept of ritual and music emphasizes humanistic care and respect in management. Etiquette is one of the behavioral norms in ancient society, advocating mutual respect and care between people, and establishing harmonious interpersonal relationships. In management practice, leaders can create a warm and harmonious working atmosphere by advocating the management philosophy of respecting, caring for employees, and emphasizing humanistic care. This atmosphere not only helps to enhance the cohesion and centripetal force of the team, but also enhances the enthusiasm and creativity of employees, promoting the continuous progress of the organization. Secondly, the ancient concept of "happiness" emphasized the psychological health and emotional experience of employees. The cultural and spiritual connotations of cultivating a person's personality and emotions through music. In management practice, managers can create a positive, relaxed, and enjoyable working atmosphere, enhance employees' sense of belonging and loyalty, through organizational culture construction, employee care activities, and other means. Thirdly, the concept of ritual and music helps to shape an organization's good image and brand value.

4.2. The relationship between monarchs and officials and leadership style

In Confucian tradition, the relationship between monarchs and subjects is seen as a relationship of power and responsibility, and the style of leaders directly affects the establishment and maintenance of this relationship. Firstly, in Confucian classics, it is emphasized that leaders should prioritize benevolence, lead by example, and promote the moral cultivation and self-improvement of organizational members. This kind of benevolence not only requires leaders to care about the material life of their employees, but more importantly, to pay attention to their spiritual needs and emotional experiences, and establish a relationship of mutual respect and mutual benefit between monarchs and officials. Secondly, Confucian management philosophy advocates a gentle and inclusive leadership

style. In Confucian classics, it is advocated that "the way of a gentleman is simple but not harsh", which means that leaders should treat their subordinates with a gentle attitude, not exerting influence or pressure, but guiding and motivating employees with a sincere and tolerant attitude. This leadership style helps to create a harmonious and stable work atmosphere, enhance team cohesion and centripetal force, and thus promote the sustainable development of the organization. Thirdly, Confucian management philosophy also emphasizes the wisdom and strategies that leaders should possess. In ancient China, the relationship between monarchs and subjects was not only a moral relationship, but also a political relationship. Leaders need to possess extraordinary wisdom and strategy, be adept at handling complex political and social relationships, and effectively achieve organizational governance and development. Therefore, leaders should continuously learn and strive to improve their leadership skills and management level in order to better play their role and contribute to the prosperity and long-term development of the organization.

5. Taoist management philosophy

The management philosophy of Taoism is represented by Laozi and Zhuangzi, and the basic spirit of Taoist cultural management philosophy is centered on "Dao" and emphasizes "Dao follows nature". Emphasizing the ideas of natural inaction, harmonious unity, and positive and negative complementarity, it has important implications and reference significance for modern society's management, philosophy of life, and other aspects.

5.1. Taoist management ideology system

5.1.1. Dao follows nature

Taoism believes that "Dao" is the origin and law of all things in the universe, and it naturally does not act and is not subject to any external intervention or change. People follow the law of the earth, the earth follows the law of the heavens, the heavens follow the law of the Tao, and the Tao follows the law of nature. All things naturally grow, develop, and disappear according to the laws of the Tao. We must follow the natural laws of the development of things and not forcibly change or distort the essence of things.

5.1.2. Rule by inaction

The Tao Te Ching emphasizes the importance of governing by inaction, which states that "the Tao always does nothing but does nothing. If the feudal lords can abide by it, all things will self transform.". Taoism believes that managers should follow natural laws, avoid excessive intervention and coercion, and teach the sage to do things without action and without words. This "inaction" does not refer to complete inaction, but rather to not excessive action. Silence and inaction, maintaining inner peace and composure, are the key to achieving governance through inaction. Only with a calm mind can one perceive the essence and laws of things, and make correct decisions.

5.1.3. Harmony and unity

advocating for harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, yearning for the realm of "coexistence with heaven and earth, and integration with all things". Managers should seek the coordination and unity of subjectivity and objectivity, neither exaggerating the subjective initiative of individuals nor belittling it. They should ensure that management activities follow inherent laws and regulations, and that management behavior is both lawful and reasonable.

5.1.4. Positive and negative complementarity

Taoism believes that the development of things is always positive and negative, that is, the development of things is always accompanied by the emergence and change of their opposites. For example, yin and yang, hardness and softness, strength and weakness are all mutually opposed and interdependent, and together they constitute the movement and change of all things in the universe. "The world should not be softer or weaker than water, and those who strive for strength should not

be able to overcome them easily. Weakness triumphs over strength, and softness triumphs over hardness." From the Tao Te Ching, water is used to metaphorically describe the power of weakness, emphasizing that using soft and flexible strategies in management can often defeat tough opponents.

5.2. Inspiration for management

5.2.1. The Enlightenment of the Tao Te Ching on Management

The Tao Te Ching in Taoist management philosophy is one of the classics of ancient Chinese philosophy, which contains rich management wisdom and has important implications for the leadership style and management practice of modern managers. The Tao Te Ching emphasizes the management philosophy of governing the country with virtue and subduing hardness with softness, providing managers with new ways of thinking and management paths. Advocate the management philosophy of "governing by doing nothing". Emphasize the principle of "doing nothing but not doing", which means achieving goals through non-coercive and non-interference means. In management practice, leaders can learn this concept from the Tao Te Ching, let go of their obsession and desire for control, give employees more autonomy and release space, stimulate their creativity and work enthusiasm, and thus achieve the natural development of the organization. The Tao Te Ching emphasizes a tolerant and gentle leadership style. Advocate the principle of "weakness is better than strength", believing that weak leadership can achieve lasting victory. In management practice, leaders can communicate with employees with a gentle and peaceful attitude, resolve conflicts, promote harmonious development of the team, and achieve long-term stability of the organization.

5.2.2. Governance through inaction and leadership wisdom

In Taoist philosophy, "governance by non action" does not refer to non action or non action, but emphasizes handling things with a tolerant, inclusive, and non-coercive attitude to achieve the best results. Leaders should go beyond their own desires and selfishness, not get entangled in trivial matters and personal emotions, but guide the team with a detached mindset. This leadership wisdom enables leaders to view problems from a broader perspective, face challenges with a more peaceful attitude, and better lead the team towards success. Secondly, the Taoist philosophy of "governing by inaction" emphasizes seizing opportunities and adapting to the overall situation. Leaders should observe changes in the environment, respond flexibly, not stick to conventions, and not force things to develop according to their own wishes. On the contrary, we should go hand in hand with change and guide the team to achieve organizational change and development with a soft and flexible attitude. Thirdly, the Taoist philosophy of "governing without action" emphasizes treating others with humility and humility, and interacting with employees with an attitude of understanding, tolerance, and respect. Leaders should listen to the opinions and suggestions of employees, respect their ideas and values, and give them full trust and support. This passive leadership wisdom enables leaders to establish good interpersonal relationships, enhance team cohesion and centripetal force, and better achieve the common goals of the organization.

5.3. Legalist management philosophy

The theory of the Legalist school began to sprout in the Xia and Shang dynasties, with the emergence of the judicial position of "Li Guan", but it matured and developed during the Warring States period. Unlike other schools of thought in the pre-Qin period, Legalism is an active action school with the rule of law as its core and the responsibility of strengthening the military and enriching the country. It put forward the important idea of "governing the country by law", which has extremely strong binding and controlling power on society and the country. It involves a wide range of complex disciplines and has continued to this day, having a profound impact on the establishment and development of modern law.

6. Legalist management ideology system

The management philosophy of Legalism was initiated by Guan Zhong and Li Gui, inherited and developed by Shang Yang and Shen Buhuo, and then summarized and collected by Han Fei in the late Warring States period, forming a series of management theories and guiding ideas. The management philosophy of Legalism mainly consists of three parts: "law", "technique", and "power", with corresponding essential meanings of legal system, means, and power. It contains rich management ideas such as governing the country by law, selecting talents based on abilities, combining rewards and punishments, and combining magic and power, providing theoretical reference for contemporary rule of law construction.

6.1. Law

The core of Legalist management is "law". Based on the contemplation of human nature, Legalism differs from Confucianism in its approach to "benevolence and propriety". It believes that the essence of "seeking benefits and avoiding harm" in human nature should require strong constraints and control, which leads to the concept of "law". Han Fei said in his book, "Law is a compilation of maps set up in official offices and distributed to the people." This is from Han Feizi's "Difficulty Three", which clearly defines "law" as written laws, regulations, and systems. Legalism emphasizes regulating people's behavior and maintaining social order by formulating clear laws, regulations, and systems. They believe that the law is a fair, objective, and universally applicable criterion, and is the cornerstone of social operation. The formulation and implementation of laws can ensure the unity and stability of the country, promote social development and progress.

Legalists believe that the role of "law" is to distinguish and stop disputes, that is, to clarify people's rights and obligations, and to solve social contradictions and conflicts. They advocate a "one size fits all" approach, which means that all problems should be resolved according to the law, rather than relying on personal subjective judgment or emotional actions. This can ensure the fairness and authority of the law, and avoid the abuse of power and corruption.

6.2. Shu

The means of management in Legalism are "Shu". In management, "Shu" is used as an auxiliary to the rule of law, as a means to control courtiers and control political power. Including the techniques of employing people, kings, and control. The technique of employing talents is mainly reflected in talent selection, appointment, and examination. In terms of selection, Legalism emphasizes the principle of "talent is the only way to appoint talents".. The object of the art of the monarch is the courtiers, who are supervised and examined through invisible and covert means. Legalists believe that the monarch must maintain a sacred and solemn identity and image towards anyone, and achieve the goal of "using art to govern subordinates", consolidating his position as a monarch with "independent vision", "independent listening", and "arbitrary". Han Fei's "control technique" permeates all aspects of employment, motivation, and law. Han Fei divides control into the following contents: prior control, profit and loss control, personnel control, situation control, power control, and control flexibility

6.3. Shi

The foundation of Legalist management is "shi". It refers to the prestige formed by the power and status held by a monarch. Legalism believes that monarchs should have sufficient power and status to maintain national unity and stability. This "trend" includes aspects such as power, status, wealth, etc. Legalism emphasizes that monarchs should be adept at using their own "power" to control their subjects and the people. They advocate that monarchs should maintain absolute control over power and ensure that their authority is not violated. At the same time, monarchs should also motivate their subjects and people to obey their rule and management through rewards and punishments. In management, "shi" is a supplement to "law" and "technique", which has a significant impact on "law" and "technique" and is a necessary condition for managing a country.

In the management philosophy of Legalism, "law", "technique", and "momentum" are interdependent and interact with each other. Among them, "law" is the foundation and prerequisite, which regulates people's behavior by formulating clear laws, regulations, and systems; "Shu" refers to means and methods that use various strategies and means to control subjects and the people; "Shi" is a guarantee and support that maintains one's authority and ruling position by possessing sufficient power and status. The three together constitute the core content of Legalist management philosophy.

7. Management insights

The Legalist management philosophy mainly emphasizes the rule of law, power concentration, and pragmatism, which are important manifestations in governing the country, society, and enterprises.

(1) The core of Legalism's management philosophy is "governing the country by law". They advocate regulating social behavior and maintaining social order by formulating clear laws. The content of the rule of law includes strict punishment and generous rewards, that is, "rewards are generous and trustworthy, and punishments are severe and necessary", to ensure the authority and fairness of the law. Legalists believe that law is the foundation for maintaining social stability and development, and only through the rule of law can social harmony and progress be achieved.

(2) Strengthening centralization: Legalism emphasizes a centralized monarchical autocratic system, believing that power should be concentrated in the center and controlled by the monarch. This can avoid the fragmentation and division of local forces, and ensure the unity and stability of the country. Legalism believes that monarchs should possess strong authority and decision-making power to cope with various challenges and crises.

(3) The Legalist school advocates the economic management philosophy of "enriching the country with agriculture". They believe that agriculture is the foundation of the national economy, and only by vigorously developing agriculture can a country achieve prosperity and strength. Legalism proposed agricultural warfare policies such as "integrating farming and warfare" and "integrating troops into agriculture", aiming to enhance the country's economic and military strength through agricultural production.

(4) Personnel management with both talent and ability: Legalism emphasizes the importance of both talent and ability in personnel management. They advocate selecting talented individuals for official positions and focus on cultivating and selecting talents. Legalism believes that human nature is to seek benefits and avoid harm, therefore implementing strict reward and punishment systems is the most effective management method. They advocate using rewards and punishments to motivate people to work actively and abide by laws and regulations.

In summary, the five thousand years of continuous civilization of the Chinese nation eloquently prove the objective existence of ancient Chinese management thought. Revealing the basic facts of the common framework of Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism in ancient China's main management ideas; Analyze the composition of its school of thought and explore the governance model of "inner sage and outer king" with Confucianism as the main focus and Taoism as the auxiliary.

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