

**International Conference on
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Abstract for Keynote Speech 2

Ethical Leadership and Chinese Culture: Leadership Lessons from *Zhen Guan*
Zheng Yao

Ip, Po-Keung

National Central University

Abstract

Drawing on traditional Chinese culture, this paper articulates a concept of ethical leadership that has a philosophical and practical component to it. The practical component of the construct contains concrete behavioral substance to link it more closely to the real world, making it more practicable. It is built on the ideas and practices of Emperor Taizhong (唐太宗), and the advices of his ministers, particularly, Wei Zheng (魏徵) during the famed Reign of Zhen Guan (627-649) (貞觀之治) in the Tang dynasty (618-907). The practical component draws on the classic texts: *Zhen Guan Zheng Yao* (《貞觀政要》) which documented Emperor Taizhong’s way of leading and the advices of his ministers, and *Di Fan* (《帝范》) which recorded the advices Taizhong gave to his son about how to be a good emperor. Underlying the practical component is the philosophical basis which also forms the core of the generic idea of Chinese ethical leadership. A benign mix of the doctrinal ideas of Rujia (儒家) (Confucianism), Daojia (道家) (Daoism) and Fajia (法家) (Legalism), the three grand schools of thought developed in the pre-Qin period, form the bulk of this philosophical core. It is argued that Taizhong’s leadership lessons were practical realization of this body of ideas. The ideas of ruling with virtues (以德治國), governance with compassion and appropriateness (仁義立國) were inherited from Rujia. The reliance on the potency of laws and norms was adopted from Fajia. And the belief in the existence of an abstract, universal and all-encompassing metaphysical principle of governance (Dao) (道) was apparently a Daojia’s heritage. Indeed, the philosophical core has virtues and legal codes mixed together to form the cardinal principle of action and ruling. The practice of leadership is in effect this philosophical leadership core in action. How ethical leadership is related to service leadership is examined. The relevance ethical leadership to modern Chinese communities is explored.