

# *Applying I Ching's Life-Gua of Chinese Culture to Human Resource Management Strategy*

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## **Abstract**

Chinese culture is one of the four ancient civilizations of the world, which is still greatly valued today. Its foundation of philosophy lies in the I-Ching, which elaborates the principles of nature of the universe and the life contained within it. While human resources management is a dynamic and interactive process, in the rise of China economy, it is interesting and thought-provoking to investigate the topic on how to apply I-Ching's "life-gua," a law of harmony, to interpret the strategy of human resources management in order to enhance the value of human resources in corporations. In this context, this study applies I-Ching's "life-gua" to interpret two component factors of human resources management strategy and four different types of human resources development strategy. The variable in the research is "life-gua," which is a trigram of arrangement formed by the year, month, date, and time of the person's birth, with the vast amount of human resources information contained within it. The research variables of human resource management strategy include two component factors, which are employees' working motivation and ability, and four types of human resource management strategies, which are development, stimulation, enhancement, and transference. The study combines Eastern philosophy of I-Ching's "life-gua" and Western scientific strategy of human resources management in an attempt to promote the practical appliance in global human resources management for international corporations.

Keywords: Chinese Culture, Life-Gua, Human Resources Management Strategy

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## Introduction

Chinese culture is well-established and remains unshakable. Fundamentally, it is because the philosophy of Chinese culture is rooted in I Ching. The Chinese people has developed the ways of heaven, earth and human with their enlightened experiences from observing objects and phenomena. According to the ways of heaven, earth, and human, human beings realize the connections and interactions among all objects, progression and development of all things, the laws of 'production and reproduction is so-called (the process of) change' and 'a unity of heaven and human' .

Contemporarily, the Mater of I Ching study in Taiwan, Mr. Yi Rui Chang (Dharma name, Zen Master Hunyuan), has carried forward Chinese culture orthodoxy all his life and founded I Ching University. Zen Master Hunyuan views I Ching Bagua as the source of human life, in which Qian denotes heaven, Dui denotes marsh, Li denotes fire, Zhen denotes thunder, Xun denotes wind, Kan denotes water, Gen denotes mountain, and Kun denotes water. In addition, he believes that sixty-four Gua symbolizes the origin of human wisdom. Therefore, I Ching is the origin of Chinese culture. It elaborates the harmonic principle of adjustment of endless development in nature and the universe. I Ching also explains that the universal harmony follows the Primordial (先天八卦) pertaining to the reconciliation of Qian, Dui, Li, Zhen, Xun, Kan, Gen, and Kun to establish harmonic and balanced relationships of each other. Therefore, the connotations of I Ching include the principles of 'simple', 'change' and 'constant'. The Chinese people comprehends the principles of 'production and reproduction is what is called (the process of) change' and 'a unity of nature and men' by following the law of harmony among mountains, rivers and earth in nature and the movement of the universe.

A man is the most important asset to an organization and the key factor of competitiveness. However, with the impact of global economic integration, the rise of China's economy, the rapid development of information technology, and changes in labor structure, how enterprises cope with the challenges caused by the environment of human resource management to obtain valuable human resources and to maintain organizational competitiveness is an important issue for them today

Human resource management means all the processes and activities of management of people within an organization, involving acquisition management、development management、compensation management and maintenance management. Men are the core of the processes and activities of management. According to employees' abilities and willingness, manpower can be divided into four types -- solid performers, underutilizers, misdirected effort and deadwood. Moreover, four different types of human resource management strategy are developed. However, how can employers understand their employees' abilities and willingness precisely? In western management science, the designs of performance appraisal system and scale measurement are often applied to understand employees' abilities and willingness, and the relevant information. Meanwhile, in order to cope with international development, more and more Western management science researches focus on the issue of cross-culture, discussing cultural differences between East and West. Hofstede (2001) claims that the differences on four primary dimensions in national cultures include power distance (PDI), individualism (IDV), uncertainty avoidance (UAI) and masculinity (MAS). However, as the rise of Eastern economy, the

philosophy of I Ching of Chinese culture is gradually valued by Western scholars of management. How to apply I Ching of Chinese culture to enterprise management for effective operation of human resource management is a noteworthy research orientation now. Therefore, this study will use I Ching's life-gua of Chinese culture to interpret the management of human resources and provide Western management science a new direction to promote East-West cultural integration

### **The lineage of I-Ching-Feng-Shui of Chinese culture**

Chinese culture has a long history more than 7,400 years. What is the root of Chinese cultural lineage? According to the publication of Zen Master Hunyuan (2016), it states "Sage Fu Xi perceived the Primordial (Earlier Heaven Eight Guas), which pertained to the principles of harmony in nature... Four hundred years later, the knowledge was passed down to Nuwa Xuannu who comprehended and extended the knowledge into the Manifested (Later Heaven Eight Guas), Nine Places and Eight Guas (Jiugongbagua)". Master Hunyuan also mentioned "Fu Xi's Primordial and Nuwa's Manifested, respectively representing 'essence' and 'application', were combined and passed down to Chinese Three Ancestors, Huangdi's Lianshan, Yandi's Guizang, and Chiyou's Jiugong. The knowledge of "Lianshan and Guizang Yi" symbolizing 'essence' is all about mountains and rivers, natural phenomena. Ancestor Chiyou inherited Later Heaven Eight Guas, Nine Places and Eight Guas, from Jiutian Xuannu which was developed into Three Yuan and Nine Yun. It was about the movement patterns of the nine planets and symbolized 'application'. Later, Guigu culture which originated from Earlier and Later Heaven Eight Guas of Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors and from Sage Wang Chan Lao Chu has both the qualities of essence and application".

Chinese sage in the celestial realm of Taichi, Wang Chan Lao Chu who styled himself as Guiguizi in the Warring States period of China had many famous disciples including Strategists Su, Zhang Yi, military strategist Sun Bin, Pang Juan, Japanese immortal Xu Fu, the elixir Mao Meng, orator Mao Sui, etc. Guiguizi's wisdom inherited from Huangdi (Yellow Emperor) culture embraces the present science and humanities, education and so on. In 1982, Wang Chan Lao Chu and the patriarch of Weixin Shengjiao, Zen Master Hunyuan (founder of I Ching University) were unified in terms of heaven and human (this is a kind of religious mysticism). Afterwards, Wang Chan Lao Chu passed the heart method of I Ching Feng Shui of Chinese culture to Zen Master Hunyuan.

I Ching's life-gua of Chinese culture which contains six Yaos, similar to Earth latitude and longitude, was drawn by Zen Master Hunyuan according to an image of Taichi appearing on his mind while Wang Chan Lao Chu and Zen Master Hunyuan were unified. Meanwhile, in the image of Taichi, there were a white bright sun and an illustration of the moon. At this moment, a four verse poem emerged from Zen Master Hunyuan's mind: 'Yin and Yang, Sun and Moon of longevity. Pity the rules of heaven are hard to know. There is a saint, Guiguizi. The world will certainly be at peace'. The vision made Zen Master Hunyuan began to study its meditative meaning. Wang Chan Lao Chu taught Zen Master Hunyuan: "Zen Master" is a master who enlightens, meditates, and calms his mind, and then develops a great law involving various clever methods". Zen Master mediated Wang Chan Lao Chu's teachings and finally developed I Ching's life-gua of Chinese culture. In July 2003, Zen Master Hunyuan

began to lecture on I Ching's life-gua in Chan Chi Shan Hsien Fo Temple located in Nantou County, Taiwan. The lectures were assembled into books.

### **The heavenly secret of I Ching's life-gua of Chinese culture**

Zen Master Hunyuan believes that I Ching will lead us to a successful road. What determines a person's life are one-third of destiny (Ming 命), one-third of hard working and one-third of Feng Shui, of which one-third of the destiny dominates a person's whole life and in fact is more important than Feng Shui. However, what is a destiny? Zen Master Hun Yuan considers that a destiny is formed life after life. A person's destiny consists of karma in his past lives. The destiny cannot be changed. Therefore, Zen Master Hunyuan stated: "As to the destiny, there is no destiny to be read, and no destiny to be forecasted. It is nothing but karma".

According to I Ching 'Life-Gua Chanji Chanjie'(Meditative secret and interpretation of Life-Gua 命卦禪機禪解) which Zen Master Hunyuan pondered, he believes that I Ching's life-gua of Chinese culture is to help a person understand himself, realize causes and conditions in his past lives, improve himself and overcome himself. The life-gua of a person is an unchangeable law. But, if the factors of Feng Shui and hardworking are added to the unchangeable law, then a slight influence might occur. Furthermore, I Ching's life-gua of Chinese culture also teaches people how to behave and cultivate themselves.

This study uses I Ching 'Life-Guas Chanji Chanjie'(Meditative secret and interpretation of Life-Guas) developed by Zen Master Hunyuan as a reference, brief excerpts of the arrangement principles are as follow:

The so-called life-gua is arranged according to a person's birth year, month, day, and hour. Birth 'day' represents Yang, therefore arranged in the up position of 'wai-gua'(outer-gua). Birth 'month' represents turbid air of Yin, arranged in the down position of 'nei-gua'(inner-gua). According to the arrangement of a person's birth time, each of the first six Yaos of life-gua represents a decade.

A person's birth 'hour' represents the change at the moment, corresponding to the constant changes of 'day', 'month' and 'hour' during 24 hours. The birth 'hour' makes a cameo appearance in the manifestation of a divination arranged according to 'day' and 'month', guest starring as a peacemaker between 'day' and 'month' who represents a variety of good and bad lucks in line with karma.

The 'hour' when a person was born symbolizes a variable of the moment and plays a role of 'dong-yao' in his life-gua arrangement because there must be a contact point when two objects collide. Overlapped light rays will have a contact point, too. Likewise, the collision of 'wai-gua' and 'nei-gua' will have a contact point, an extremely short moment. That is 'hour'. A person's birth year is very important in his life-gua and transcends the domination of the solar galaxy. It is a controller of a person's total energy and represents his benefactor. The heavenly secret derived from a life-gua, the arrangement of birth time, is so-called 'ming', habits. Everyone has their own habits, life styles and customs. I Ching's life-gua reveals the insight of heaven, earth, time and affair in addition to 'ming'. What is 'heaven'? 'Heaven'

contains natural blessing (Yang) and disaster (Yin). Understanding 'earth' means to realize our position. Understanding 'affair' means to realize time. Every change of each Yao in life-gua inspires people to understand their karma. If a person can understand another's character, they can co-habitat. Understanding character means understand self's or other's habits, essences and capability. Then, people will get along well.

### **The meditative secret of I Ching's life-gua of Chinese culture**

Zen Master Hunyuan(2006) thinks the heavenly secret is different from the meditative secret. The heavenly secret lasts forever. The meditative secret tells how an individual goes beyond the law of 'unchanging' and turns it into the law of 'changing' and eventually transforms himself into a practitioner of mindfulness and becomes the master of himself. The meditative secret is part of nature. A being lives in a nature. How a person lives in harmony with nature and transcends nature, which is the meditative secret.

Zen Master Hunyuan claims that the abstruseness of unchanging of the heavenly secret is called 'cause and effect' as well. The heavenly secret originally does not involve life. It contains the meditative secret which is alive and not empty. The meditative secret is a concrete interaction and harmonic. The meditative interpretation of I Ching's life-gua is to change lucks. Since destiny is an unchangeable fact, what we can do is to practice according to everyone's 'Dong Yao' of life-gua to change lucks. Such transform of mindset is the true meaning of meditation.

Therefore, Zen Master Hunyuan thinks that using I Ching to understand life-gua in Chinese culture can help us understand our mind at the moment, our energy and relationships with others, and adjust mutual relations. When we understand a person's character and habits, we will be able to know how to give him hopes, encourage him and inspire his confidence. This confirms the sayings 'everyone can do something good' and 'know thyself, ever-victorious'. The victory lays on mutual understanding, caring and cherishing, not blaming.

### **The application of I Ching's life-gua of Chinese culture to human resource management strategy**

In the treacherous business environment, companies rely heavily on the strategic management of human resources in Western management science. Therefore, this study divides manpower into four types according staff's capacity and willingness to work:

- (A) solid performer : High ability and motivation; managers should provide development opportunities.
- (B) underutilizer : High ability but lack motivation; managers should focus on interpersonal abilities.
- (C) misdirected effort : Lack of ability but high motivation; managers should focus on training.
- (D) deadwood : Low ability and motivation; managerial action, outplacement, demotion and firing.

Four human resource management strategies have been developed in corresponding to the types of staff:

- (A) Development strategy: including future career development, positive incentives and training
- (B) Encouragement strategy: through the incentive strategy to enhance their willingness.
- (C) Enhancement strategy: through enhancement strategy to enhance their abilities.
- (D) Transfer strategy measures: including manpower adjustment, leave management, disciplinary management and counseling interviews

Human resource management is to achieve strategic goals with the abilities and actions required to establish an organization of employees through the design and implementation of human resource management systems, and human resource policies and activities. Therefore, the strategies of human resource management pertains to how to help the employees to understand themselves, realize the causes and conditions in their past lives, improve themselves, overcome their shortcomings, and finally sublimate their lives. Similarly, the strategies allow an organization to understand the impacts of its staff's behavior on the practice of human resource management. For instance, in order to improve manpower, an organization can select and cultivate the employees they need through recruitment, selection, and training. For enhancing employee willingness to work, an organization can have plans for job enrichment and enlargement, and establish its promotion and reward systems. In terms of working environment, it can strengthen its leadership styles, enterprise culture, etc. to create a good cultural environment, and then shape itself into a high performance or effective and healthy organization. These all signify the true meaning of human resource management strategy.

The core of human resource management is 'men'. The root of Chinese culture lays in I Ching. What I Ching described is the harmony law of adjustment existing in nature and the universe. Therefore, this study found the heavenly secret and meditative secret in I Ching's life-gua could be derived from the arrangement of an employee's birth month. The life-Gua can tell what 'shiyao'(世爻) is. A person's birth year discloses its relationship with 'shiyao' in his life-gua, which indicates the person's domination of total energy. If a person's relationship of his birth year with 'shiyao' of life-gua is 'reinforce', then he can be assigned more tasks or gets promotion and transfers because he has more positive attitude and greater potential in terms of stress management and personal potential.

Secondly, changes of 'yao' in a person's life-gua represent his karma and meditative secret for spiritual practice and thought changing. If we can help employees understand changes of each moment and help them to practice and transform, then the team will get along very well and create a harmonious working environment. Moreover, according to the arrangement of a person's birth time, each of the first six Yaos of life-gua represents a decade. As a result, we can understand a person's interrelationship and his energy at each moment from his age. That is a good reference for the adjustment of human resource management strategy.

Additionally, because the enterprises are facing the challenges of globalization, the idea of team design is widely used in an organization to boost human resources for quick responses to environmental changes. Team diversity might arise from the team members' different views on the tasks or goals. As a result, that encourages solution-based thinking, improves the quality of decision-making and team performance (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003). Therefore, how to effectively manage a diversified team and improve team effectiveness has become a significant issue in an organization. If a team leader knows every team member's birth year, month, day and hour, and their age when organizing his team, then he will be able to realize each member's habits, nature, characteristics and performance. Thus, the leader can find suitable incentive language to help members understand and care each other, avoid blaming each other and reach a consensus to promote team harmony and effectiveness.

## **Conclusion**

This study aims to apply I Ching life-gua of Chinese culture to elaborate human resource management and to provide a new perspective to the Western management science to facilitate the integration of Eastern and Western cultures. To sum up, this study proposes four suggestions.

1. I Ching's life-gua provides the regular principle of adjustment for human resource management through the arrangements and connotations of I Ching life-gua of Chinese culture.
2. I Ching's 'Dong Yao' of life-gua contains unchangeable heavenly secret which facilitates mutual understanding and care of organizations and individuals.
3. I Ching's life-gua involves the meditative secret which broadens the organization's educational views for human resources management.
4. I Ching's life-gua emphasizes 'everyone is good for something'. Tasks should be assigned in accordance with a person's aptitude, right person in the right place. The virtue is the same for everyone no matter what position he is in.

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