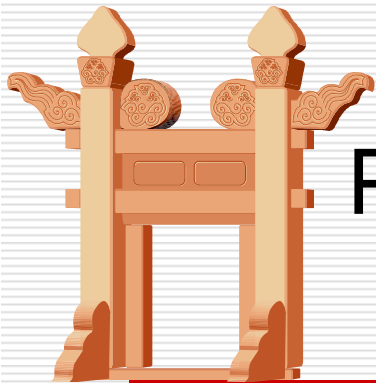


**E-Leader CASA:
Chinese American Scholars Association,
Singapore 4 – 6 January 2010**

**Applying Strategic Leadership,
the Way of the Dragon**

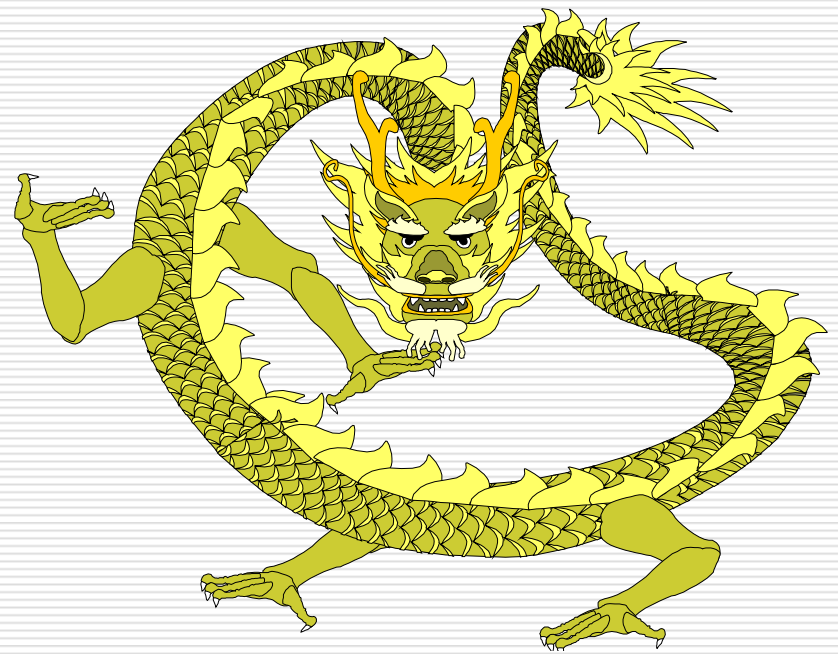


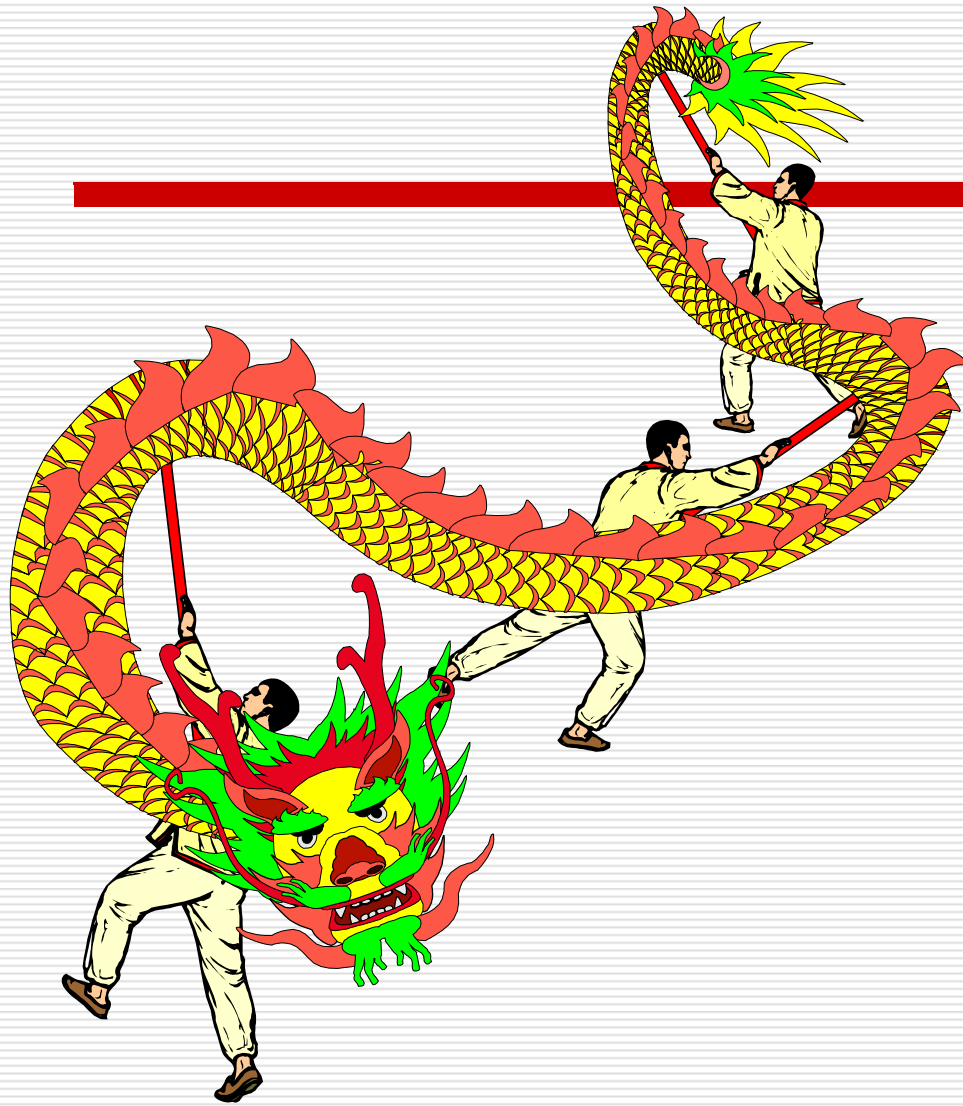
Prof. Dr. Kim Cheng Patrick Low



This paper is intended to examine the ways, **uncover the gems of wisdom** [though we are not saying that there had been no errors or wrong doings] in which the ancient Chinese emperors led and administered the country, the advocacy of steadfast character, goodness, virtue, humane-ness and harmony with the world at large. The paper also carries **several leadership relevance and lessons.**

Why refers to the
**Chinese or
oriental dragon?**





The Chinese dragon, a celestial mythical creature, is one of the world's most recognized symbols.

1: Know Thyself, Know Thy Other Party

“Raise your sail one foot and you get ten feet of wind.” (Chinese proverb)

Knowing (and appreciating) one's place in society and others' worth, one should capitalize one's strengths, and eliminate one's weaknesses to be successful in life.

2: Set the Example, Act & Realize the Power of Example

“Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.”

Idle talks should not be encouraged, and actions promoted. One should not fear having faults or shortcomings, but what's critical is that one should know of one's faults and be sure or determined to do something about them.

3: Better Be A Silent Achiever & Up-keep One's Integrity

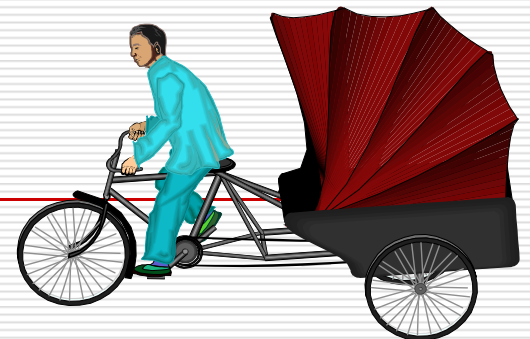
“If the stick is crooked, the shadow cannot be straight.” (Unknown source, cited in Low, 2006, 2000: 139).

Tao follows the natural order; the human mind is originally quiet but is normally clouded by thoughts and desires. Once such mental obstacles are eliminated, then clear mind or perhaps heart will naturally manifest itself, and that is integrity.

Ancient Chinese scriptures have it that:

“The false Master is quite ferocious,
But possesses no real power.
The Master does not make such a show,
But his touch is as heavy as a mountain.

(Chueh Yuan, cited in Lerner, 1976: 119)



4: Practice Humane-ness, the Tao Of the Ancient Emperors (read as Strategic Leaders).

‘Behave toward everyone as if receiving a guest.’ (A Chinese saying)

The benevolence of the dragon signifies “greatness, goodness and blessings” (CDOT, 2009). Humane (Cleary, 1991: 4), the emperor rules justly and with compassion – after all, he is given the Heavenly Mandate. Positive relationships and harmony are stressed. The country and its citizens are considered as one big happy family; this has its roots in Confucianism.

5: Respect Talents & Inspire Followers

“One can easily deal with matters using understanding. It’s as simple as using sunlight to melt ice” (Wang Xuaming, 1993: 24).

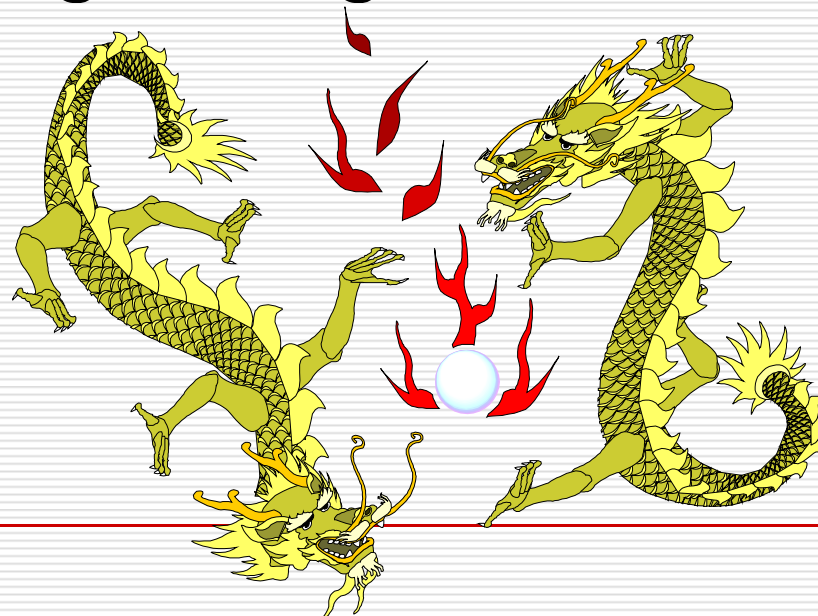
Strategic leaders have several good, loyal followers or teams. They grow their people and achieve success through the strengths and gifts of their own teams, co-workers and employees. “When recruiting always pay respect to talent, That is the way to make a country (*also read as company or business*) strong and its citizens prosperous. Only the foolish do otherwise.” (Wang Xuanming, 1993: 11, *italics mine*). Strategic leaders appreciate the human capital.

Look at Bhasin and Low (2002: 110), Singapore recruits and selects the best in the world. “Singapore leaders have long realized the need to augment from abroad the limited local talent available at home, especially... technical and managerial expertise.”

6: Employ 'Big Picture' Thinking, Be Objective & Love.

Be board-minded, avoid strategies that lack foresight... the tree trunk should always be stronger than the branches.

This is true in leading an organization or a country.



7: Prosper Thy Neighbor' – When There is 'Big Peace', There is 'Big Prosperity'

“Men in the game are blind, men outside see clearly.” (Chinese proverb)

True, ancient China often had many wars and internal strife. But the wise Chinese emperor very much avoided wars and violence. Normally non-violence was embraced, and war or violence was deemed necessary as the last resort. To win without fighting is better than winning with losses. “In war, the victorious strategist only seeks battle after victory has been won, whereas who is destined to defeat first fights and afterwards looks for victory” (Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, 3rd century, cited in de Smedt, 1995).

Taoism also influences China very much. The strategic leader should uphold the idea of **non-contention.**

Lao tze pointed out that violence and conflict, no matter how tightly controlled, could not help but cause negative side effects. The *Tao* ideal is to solve problems through peaceful means. Those who win using force alone lacked strategies. Those who mastered human psychology and moral values, and are able to use them against the enemy or the other party are truly wise.

8:Toughen Up & Embrace Resilience

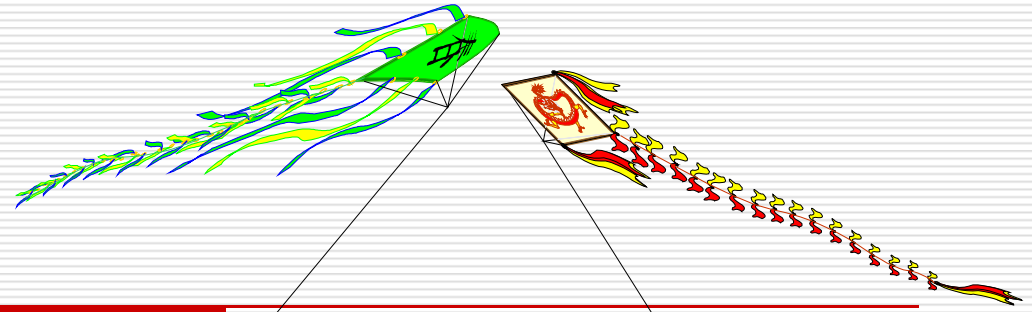
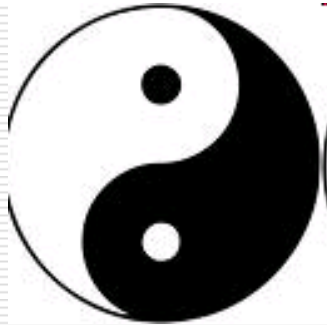
'You think you lost your horse? Who knows, he may bring a whole herd back to you someday.' (Chinese Proverb).

'Failure is not falling down but refusing to get up', goes a Chinese saying. One should embrace the spirit of 'a fall into a ditch makes one wiser'; the strategic leader takes the hit as something positive. Low (2006) speaks of any unexpected misfortune, any sudden hit produces significant physiological and psychological effects. One's blood pressure rises; the muscles in one's body tense up, and one's breathing gets shallow. Adrenaline is pumped in to meet the 'challenge'; the hit say, ~~a serious obstacles faced, is considered as a gift or a challenge.~~

9:Be Creative & Inject Resourcefulness

“A closed mind is like a closed book, just a block of wood.” (Chinese proverb).

The ways in which the wise chooses to solve life’s problems are impeccable. They are like lotus – elegant and beautiful though it emerge from the mud. The strategic leader needs to tackle all situations in different but clever sort of ways to avoid hardships and disasters and to attain happiness for the local populace.



In life, there are ups and down;
there're always cycles.

Tai Chi (there is no beginning or end)
prevails, with interplay of *yang* and *yin*;
neither an absolute 'good' nor an
absolute 'evil' exists, but instead
harmony through balance and the
flowing change of the opposite polarities.

10: Embrace Long-term Thinking, Being Patient & Apply Foresight

Tranquil moments: “In a valley of pines, I walk alone with staff in hand...” (Hong Yingming, cited in Tsai, 1991: 82).

When this dragon analogy is applied to strategic leadership, it is linked to longevity and success. And one can construe such a leadership as having vision, long-term thinking and planning which grows the organization's (nation's) strengths and success.

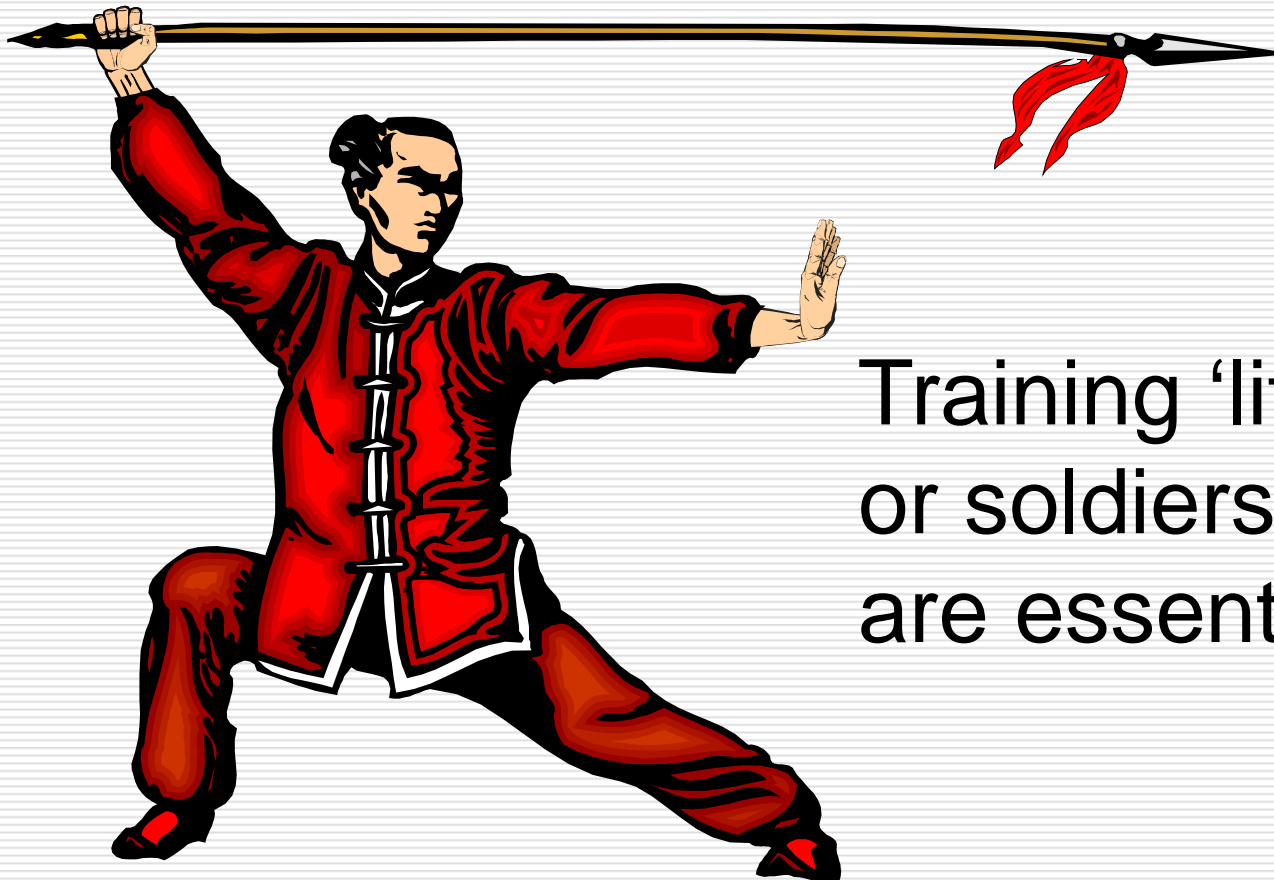
11: Seize Opportunities, Learn & Apply Training and Overall Growth

If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people.

“A chicken is hatched even from such a well-sealed thing as an egg.” (Chinese proverbs)

Strategic leaders also adopt, as a rule, taking advantage of the situation to render the competition ineffective. Opportunists are those who know how to capitalize situations and with this, come the positive element. Even a crisis (this is related to the saying earlier mentioned: ‘a fall into a ditch makes one wiser’) is seen as (a growth) opportunity(ies).

Get better, or get
beaten!



Training 'little dragons'
or soldiers for battle
are essential.

12:Apply Flexibility & Agility

“The wise adapt themselves to circumstances, as water moulds itself to the pitcher”

“Of all the stratagems, to know when to quit is the best.” (Chinese proverbs).

The Chinese dragon is said to be flexible, applying appropriate strategy depending on the situation and circumstances. When the competition attacks its head, the Chinese dragon uses its tail to strike. When its tail is attacked, it uses its head to strike the enemy. When the enemy attacks its center portion, both its head and tail will strike the enemy (Low, 2009: 55).

Q & A Session
