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LÜSHI CHUNQIU
AND THE VALUE-BASED LEADERSHIP MODEL
IN ANCIENT CHINA

Value-based leadership (VBL) has been one of the hot topics in organisational psychology and leadership studies in the recent years (Lemoine et al. 148). The interest in this area of leadership studies can be traced back to Robert K. Greenleaf and his influential *Servant Leadership* (Greenleaf). Although more than forty years have passed and numerous scholars have been tackling various topics relating to values in leadership, it is nevertheless still considered a relatively new area, requiring much further research (Chang et al. 15).

Ancient Chinese political and philosophical thought is saturated with elements of VBL in the modern understanding of the term. Texts across various schools and traditions of pre-imperial China, from *Laozi* 老子 and *Zhuangzi* 莊子 to the Confucian classics contain a true wealth of content that can be identified with the concepts of ethical and political leadership. The potential interest of ancient Chinese texts in management and leadership studies has already been acknowledged by some researchers, mostly of the Chinese cultural background.¹

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¹One notable example of such interest is Chen & Lee (see Bibliography) as the first comprehensive study of this sort.

Surprisingly, the authors of these volumes rarely mention the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, a 3rd century B.C. work of collective authorship, which arguably offers the most thorough and extensive discussion on leadership theory in all extant, Chinese pre-imperial texts. While the concepts and ideas included in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* can be found in earlier texts, such as the *Zuo Commentary* 左傳, the *Liji* 禮記, the *Analects* 論語, and others, in this work they are reformulated and arranged into a coherent, all-round construct worthy of a separate analysis. And yet the *Lüshi Chunqiu*'s concepts of leadership are evaluated only in a handful of Chinese-language scholarly publications, several of which are mentioned later on in this paper. The topic seems severely under-researched, and this paper attempts to bridge this gap.

I approach the analysis of *Lüshi Chunqiu* concepts of leadership from the modern VBL perspective, as discussed in Lemoine et al. And thus, the discussion is divided into three parts: the ethical, the authentic, and the servant leadership models. In each part, I discuss how the *Lüshi Chunqiu* relates to the modern definitions of the VBL terms, using textual evidence from the original work. This approach does not attempt to juxtapose the *Lüshi Chunqiu* with modern theories on leadership, and does not include in-depth analysis of modern scholarship on the subject. The VBL perspective is used, rather, as a cognitive framework facilitating the analysis of leadership concepts in the *Lüshi Chunqiu*.

1. LÜ BUWEI AND THE *LÜSHI CHUNQIU*

Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (?-235 B.C.) was originally a Wei kingdom merchant who ventured on to a political career, succeeding in placing prince Zichu 子楚 at the throne of the kingdom of Qin in 249 B.C. This allowed Lü to build a position of great influence at the Qin court, serving Zichu as the new king Zhuangxiang 莊襄王 during his brief, two-year rule, and his son Ying Zheng 嬴政 who later became the First Emperor of Qin. Lü was a powerful advisor to the throne, and a father figure for the young king Ying Zheng, functioning practically as his regent until 238, when the king commenced his independent rule. This is when the relationship between the two started to deteriorate. A year later Lü was exiled, and in 235 committed suicide, presumably to avoid further atrocities (Yang Kuan 485).

Until that time, Lü enjoyed wealth, influence and respect. According to his biography in Sima Qian's *Shiji* 史記 ("Lü Buwei Liezhuan", Section 9), he supported up to three thousands private residents, who were mostly men

of learning, representing various schools of thought. It is presumably from this group that Lü recruited authors for his *œuvre*, which must have been compiled for a number of years, but was completed and publicly displayed sometime between 241 and 238 (Zhu & Su 3; Knoblock & Riegel 32). The book, known as the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, and rendered in Tang Bowen's excellent translation as *Lü's Commentaries of History*², is understood to have served as a powerful argument in the ideological power struggle between Lü and king Zheng (Guo Moruo 172 and others). And while Lü evidently lost that battle, his work served later generations as proof of leadership concepts at the Qin court which greatly differed from the authoritarian, legalist thought that was to become the gloomy trademark of the First Emperor's rule. The view of leadership described in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* puts together various ideals and concepts from across the spectrum of Chinese, pre-imperial thought, including Daoist, Confucian, Yin-yang, and Legalist (*fajia* 法家) traditions. As an eclectic piece of scholarly work of the last decades of the Warring States Period, the *Lüshi Chunqiu* paints a comprehensive and representative picture of leadership theories of pre-imperial China (Li Fuxuan & Li Yan 122-123). The concepts presented in this collective effort of scholars working under the auspices of Lü Buwei show strong inclination towards what we now call value-based leadership. This provides strong basis for the assumption that value-based leadership in different shades and tones might have been the leading approach among intellectual elites of the late Warring States Period towards political leadership across the various schools and traditions.

2. ETHICAL, AUTHENTIC AND SERVANT LEADERSHIP – MODERN DEFINITIONS

The three standard models of leadership are interrelated, with considerable overlap. Their definitions vary between scholars, as shown in recent reviews papers (see especially Lemoine et al.). Below, I attempt to provide

² The term *chunqiu* 春秋 (literally “Springs and Autumns”) poses a challenge for the translator. Used most notably as the title of the ritual chronicle of the state of Lu, spanning the years 722-481 B.C., the term can be also found in titles of other works, e.g. *Wu Yue Chunqiu* 吳越春秋, *Yanzi Chunqiu* 晏子春秋 or *Chu Han Chunqiu* 楚漢春秋. Springs and autumns were the seasons when the most important sacrificial ceremonies were performed, the term also meant simply ‘years’. It points to the cyclical nature of time (the seasons come one after the other), and the passage of history. Knoblock and Riegel 2000 render the title of the work as *The Annals of Lü Buwei*, Sellmann as *Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*.

brief explanations of how these terms are generally understood in modern literature on the subject.

Ethical leadership focuses on the leader as a “legitimate and credible role model”, one whose decisions are “observed and emulated by others”. Ethical leader not only sets the moral standard, rewards ethical conduct and punishes those who diverge from the principles, but also “provides followers with voice” (Brown et al., 120-121). In this way teams achieve more, as Brown, Treviño, & Harrison observe:

Because when employees are treated fairly and well by a leader they trust, they are likely to think about their relationship with the leader and organization in terms of social exchange rather than economic exchange and they are likely to reciprocate by helping the organization in a variety of ways. Thus, we propose that followers of an ethical leader will be willing to put extra effort into their work... (123)

An authentic leader is highly motivated, deeply ethical in his/her conduct, focused on building strong interpersonal relations with team members, and on helping them grow. He/she is consistent in what he/she says and does (Gardner et al., 1123-1124). Many definitions of authentic leadership expose self-based constructs, such as self-awareness or self-concordance. Whitehead provides a good example of such focus:

In this article, a definition of an authentic leader is adopted as one who: (1) is self-aware, humble, always seeking improvement, aware of those being led and looks out for the welfare of others; (2) fosters high degrees of trust by building an ethical and moral framework; and (3) is committed to organizational success within the construct of social values. (850)

Servant leader, in now-classical definition by Robert K. Greenleaf, “is servant first... the difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant – first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served...” (13-14). Another oft-quoted definition by Mark G. Ehrhart focuses on the servant leader acknowledging “his or her moral responsibility not only to the success of the organization, but also to his or her subordinates, the organization’s customers, and other organizational stakeholders” (68). In more recent definitions of servant leadership, stress is put on the value for multiple stakeholders.

Servant leadership is often compared with transformative leadership, but the two terms are not interchangeable. Nathan Eva, Mulyadi Robin, Sen Sendjayac, Dirkvan Dierendonck, & Robert C. Lidene provide us with a clear explanation of the difference:

Transformational leaders' motive to focus on followers' needs seems to be to enable them to better achieve organizational goals (i.e., a means to an end), whereas servant leaders' is on the multidimensional development of followers (i.e., an end in itself)... Servant leadership more explicitly incorporates stewardship as an essential element of effective leadership; this brings a focus on a long-term perspective that takes into account all stakeholders. (113)

The authors then proceed to formulating their own definition:

Servant leadership is an (1) other-oriented approach to leadership (2) manifested through one-on-one prioritizing of follower individual needs and interests, (3) and outward reorienting of their concern for self towards concern for others within the organization and the larger community. (114)

As shown by G. James Lemoine, Chad A. Hartnell, & Hannes Leroy, comparison of ethical, authentic and servant leadership definitions shows overlap between the three terms in two areas: describing moral consistency and moral behaviour (156). The leadership qualities which lie at the very center of the VBL model are: behaving in highly moral fashion, exhibiting high moral standards for others, and being morally self-conscious.

3. ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE *LÜSHI CHUNQIU*

The art of rulership as described in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* is based on values rather than skills or strategies. This is demonstrated in Section "Upholding Virtue" of the Chapter "Views on Rising Above the Worldly" (離俗覽·上德):

For governing the world or a state, there is nothing more important than advocating virtue and practising righteousness. When virtue and righteousness are advocated, people will work for goodness without giving them rewards, and evils can be eliminated without meting out punishments. This was the way Shen Nong and Huang Di governed. (Tang 245-246)³

為天下及國，莫如以德，莫如行義。以德以義，不賞而民勸，不罰而邪止，此神農、黃帝之政也。(離俗覽·上德)

The original term used in the above quote to describe 'virtue' is *de* 德. According to the *Lüshi Chunqiu Dictionary* by Zhang Shuangkang, Yin Guoguang, & Chen Tao (347-348), the character *de* is used in three different meanings across the *Lüshi Chunqiu*: that of 'moral conduct' (*daode pinxing*

³All translations from the *Lüshi Chunqiu* in this paper are after Tang Bowen's translation *Lü's Commentaries of History*.

道德品行), that of ‘benevolence’ or ‘favour’ (*ende* 恩德, *enhui* 恩惠), and that of ‘gratefulness’ (*ganji* 感激). In this and in other quotes from the text used in this section of the paper, the first of the three meanings, i.e. that of ‘moral conduct’ seems to be the only interpretative option. This is also how this and other similar fragments are rendered in Tang Bowen’s translation, in which he uniformly uses the English term ‘virtue’. This interpretation is also further supported by Chinese scholars writing on ethical leadership in the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, most notably Wang Qicai (Wang 113).

If we agree that the *de* in these contexts stands for ‘moral conduct’ or ‘virtue’, other proofs of the ethical leadership approach used in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* are not hard to find. In Section “Complying with the Will of the People” of the Chapter “Records of Late Autumn” (季秋紀·順民), the authors write about rulers who enjoy the support of the people not through lowering taxes, giving out food or other transactional policies, but through showing their adherence to high moral standards:

The early kings complied with the will of the people and consequently achieved success and fame. In the past, there were many men who enjoyed the support of the people through their virtues and accomplished great deeds. (Tang 83)

先王先順民心，故功名成。夫以德得民心以立大功名者，上世多有之矣。(季秋紀·順民)

The original Chinese phrase *yi de de min xin* 以德得民心, rendered by Tang Bowen rather softly as “enjoy support of the people through ... virtues” would perhaps more clearly demonstrate this point if translated literally as “to win people’s hearts/minds through virtue”. We will discuss exactly how the virtue should be cultivated and practiced by the ruler according to the *Lüshi Chunqiu* in the next section of the paper devoted to authentic leadership. Here, let us concentrate on the value of the virtue itself.

For the ruler, moral conduct is not only a way to win over the hearts of the subjects. It is also an important assessment criterion in selecting his associates. In Section “Filial Piety” of the Chapter “Views on Filial Piety” (孝行覽·孝行), the Confucian thinker Zeng Shen 曾參 is quoted in support of the argument that virtue is at the forefront of leadership ideals of the idealized “early kings”:

Zeng Zi said, “The early kings ruled the world by following five principles: Honoring men of virtue, honoring men of exalted position, honoring the elders, respecting one’s seniors, and treating the young with kindness. Men of virtue are to be honored because they are close to the sages. (Tang 139)

曾子曰：“先王之所以治天下者五：貴德，貴貴，貴老，敬長，慈幼。此五者，先王之所以定天下也。所謂貴德，為其近於聖也”（孝行覽·孝行）

These who are virtuous should be valued and respected by the ruler ahead of the high-ranking nobles/officials, or the senior/elderly, since “they are close to the sages”. And yet, this by itself does not explain exhaustively the specific reasons for giving virtue such high priority. Why should the ruler be virtuous, and why should he pay so much attention to “honoring men of virtue”?

Ethical leadership in the text is described in pragmatic terms as simply more successful than transactional or autocratic rule. Being ethical pays in long term. In Section “Repayment” of Chapter “Views on Caution against Greatness” (慎大覽·報更) three different anecdotes are given to illustrate this point. In the first one, Zhao Xuanmeng (趙宣孟) is rescued from an assassination plot by a man he had saved from starvation two years before. In the second one, the famous strategist Zhang Yi (張儀) repays the kindness he experienced from a prince of Eastern Zhou when he serves as advisor to the powerful king of Qin. In the third one, Lord Mengchang (孟嘗君) treats the diplomat Chunyu Kun (淳于髡) well, and Chunyu Kun in return persuades the king of Qi to protect Lord Mengchang’s fiefdom of Xue. These narratives show gratitude and kindness in personal relations as factors which sometimes play decisive roles in historical events. They function in the text as encouragement for rulers to behave in similar fashion, as “a kindness can never be too small” (*de ji wu xiao* 德幾無小, Tang 169).

Another example of such argumentation in favor of ethical inter-personal relations is offered in an anecdote in Chapter “Views on Rising above the Worldly” in Section “Satisfying Desires” (離俗覽·為欲). Duke Wen of Jin decides to withdraw from a siege of Yuan even though Yuan seems on the brink of surrender⁴. Duke Wen has previously promised his soldiers that the siege would last no longer than 7 days, and he prefers to forego a military victory rather than to break his word. In this way he strengthens faith/trust (*xin* 信) in the army, and the soldiers’ high morale breeds fear in the inhabitants of Yuan, leading to their unconditional surrender just one year later. Duke Wen explains the motivation behind such a bold decision:

Faith is a treasure of the state. I will not violate faith in order to gain Yuan.
(Tang 255)

信，國之寶也。得原失寶，吾不為也。（離俗覽·為欲）

⁴ This anecdote is present in a slightly different version in *Zuo Commentary* (Xigong 25th year 僖公·二十五年).

Ethical behavior of a leader is effective because it affects others, and does not go unnoticed. This is explained through yet another anecdote in Chapter “Views on being a Ruler”, Section “Attraction of the Same Kind” (恃君覽·召類). An envoy from Chu on his mission to the state of Song observes highly compassionate behavior of his host, the Minister of Works, towards a commoner of Song. Upon his return to Chu, the envoy advises the king against attacking Song, even though the country seems small and vulnerable:

“It is not advisable to attack Song. Its ruler is virtuous and its ministers are benevolent. The virtuous wins the support of the people, and the benevolent can make use of the people. If the state of Chu attacks Song and gets no result, it will be laughed at by people of the whole world.” As a result, the attack against Song was called off and diverted against the state of Zheng. (Tang 270)

「宋不可攻也。其主賢，其相仁。賢者能得民，仁者能用人。荆國攻之，其無功而為天下笑乎！」故釋宋而攻鄭。(恃君覽·召類)

The line of such argument is given in the opening sentences of the Section: “Things of the same kind are attracted to each other.” (*lei tong xiang zhao* 類同相召, Tang 269). If one of the ministers of Song behaves in such a highly ethical way towards a common inhabitant of the country, the ruler of Song must be a person of high moral conduct, and as such, enjoys loyalty and support of his subjects. The authors further explain: “Military force [is] used on a state in disorder and not on a well-governed state. There is nothing worse than attacking a well-governed state.” (*Luan ze yong, zhi ze zhi. Zhi er gong zhi, buxiang mo da yan.* 亂則用，治則止。治而攻之，不祥莫大焉, Tang 270). And so Song was able to defend itself against Chu not because of military prowess or clever tactics, but because ethical leadership of its ruler was noticed by the envoy, and Song was considered a “well-governed state.”

The principle of “things of the same kind attracting one another” is useful in explaining another important reason why a leader should exhibit high moral standards. Ethical rulers attract into service subjects with similar principles; their motivation stretches beyond money, position or fame. If the ruler has such people on board, far more can be achieved not only because they are loyal, but also because they are prepared to sacrifice for the ruler and for the cause.

A whole section of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* – “Loyalty and Selflessness” in Chapter “Records of Mid-Winter” (仲冬紀·忠廉) is devoted to this idea. It includes two narratives of subjects who commit suicide as expression of loyalty towards their rulers. These rather extreme examples of loyalty serve to illustrate the point that the ruler should treasure men of integrity:

A scholar's integrity must not be impugned because he attaches great importance to his integrity. Since he attaches great importance to his integrity, he looks upon it as more valuable than wealth and honor... Such a person will not pursue selfish ends if he has power, will not act disgracefully if he is an official, and will not flee from the enemy if he is in command of an army... It may be said that a country having this kind of scholars is a country with capable personalities. This kind of persons are hard to come by. It is bad for a country which has this kind of persons, but does not understand them. (Tang 104-105)

士議之不可辱者大之也，大之則尊於富貴也…若此人也，有勢則必不自私矣，處官則必不為汙矣，將眾則必不撓北矣…國有士若此，則可謂有人矣。若此人者固難得，其患雖得之有不智。(仲冬紀·忠廉)

Ethical leaders should attract virtuous subjects into service not only because they can be trusted, and if needed, can even sacrifice their lives. They are valuable also due to their honesty. An ethical ruler should give them a voice, showing openness to critique and willingness to follow the advice of those below him. The authors of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* are quite outspoken on this point. There are at least four separate sections across the text which deal specifically with this issue: “Clearing Blockage” in the Chapter “Views on Being a Ruler” (恃君覽·達鬱), “Valuing Forthright Words” and “Forthright Advice” in the Chapter “Comments on Valuing Forthright Words” (貴直論·貴直; 直諫), and “Knowing Oneself” in the Chapter “Comments on Discretion” (不苟論·自知). Each of these sections includes several narratives which illustrate the main teaching. For reason of space, let us limit to the main message of each section. Together, they show clearly that the authors of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* expect the ethical leader to give voice to his subjects so that he can avoid mistakes, mend his ways, and be more aware of the issues he needs to tackle in the country. Most importantly, however, the authors believe that only “men of virtue” can serve as such honest advisors, hence the need to seek for them and engage them at court (see also Wang 2007, 118-119 for a similar point):

As the ruler has no mirror to look into, the day is not far when his country will be destroyed. Who may serve as a mirror? Probably only a man of learning... If a ruler is virtuous, his subjects can criticize him sharply. (Tang 273-274)

人之阿之亦甚矣，而無所鏡，其殘亡無日矣。孰當可而鏡？其唯士乎！…人主賢則人臣之言刻。(恃君覽·達鬱)

A virtuous ruler values no one more than men of learning. He values men of learning because they speak frankly. When speaking frankly, wrongs will be exposed. The trouble with rulers is that they want to know what is wrong but dislike frank words. (Tang 307)

賢主所貴莫如士。所以貴士，為其直言也。言直則枉者見矣。人主之患，欲聞枉而惡直言。（貴直論·貴直）

When a subject speaks too bluntly, the ruler may become angry. When the ruler is angry, the speaker may be in danger. Who is willing to take the risk unless he is a man of virtue? (Tang 309)

言極則怒，怒則說者危，非賢者孰肯犯危？（貴直論·直諫）

A ruler who wishes to know himself must have outspoken advisors. This is why the king appoints councilors and employs teachers and coaches to point out his mistakes. A person can hardly know himself. This is particularly so with a ruler. (Tang 322)

人主欲自知，則必直士。故天子立輔弼，設師保，所以舉過也。夫人故不能自知，人主猶其。（不苟論·自知）

Choosing the right people with correct mindset for service is a recurrent theme across the text. The ability to select virtuous ministers seems to be the main function devised for the ruler, rather than daily management of the country:

Those who were good at being a princely ruler in ancient times, therefore, expended their energies on choosing the right people and did little in running the government themselves. They had mastered the correct way of being a princely ruler. (Tang 19)

故古之善為君者，勞於論人，而佚於官事，得其經也。（仲春紀·當染）

As James D. Sellmann rightly observes:

A major criterion in judging a ruler's wisdom and foresight is his ability to select the proper personnel, or *shi*. The *shi* (knights or scholar officials) are a key link in the ruler's ability to set an example for the masses to emulate – the self-cultivating ruler only appoints self-actualizing ministers, generals, attendants, and so on.

... The LSCQ is one of the earliest texts to systematically employ the expression *youdao zhi shi* (scholar-knights who possess the way). Throughout the text there are repeated examples, and even whole chapters, devoted to the importance of selecting and appointing proper personnel who comply with the way (*dao*). (62)

Ethical leadership is explained in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* in very pragmatic terms as a successful approach to rulership. The ruler gains by being virtuous through unwavering loyalty of his subjects, and gratitude of those he assists. His high moral conduct radiates far and wide: enemy states perceive his rule as strong, and are discouraged from hostile actions. Virtuous men

are attracted to serve him, as “things of the same kind attracting one another”. Having such able, incorrupt and highly motivated persons at court, the ruler can achieve far more than through “meting out rewards and punishments” (Tang 146). Virtuous men will be willing to sacrifice for the ruler, and are brave enough to offer honest advice, and even directly admonish him. An ethical ruler respects them above all others, entrusts them with the affairs of the state, and gives them the space to offer constructive critique.

4. AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP IN THE *LÜSHI CHUNQIU*

The concept of authentic leadership in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* centers around the ruler’s self-awareness and self-cultivation. According to Wang Qicai: “if the ethical ruler wishes to control all under heaven, he needs first to self-cultivate, as it is the basis of rulership” (君王欲得天下, 必先修身, 修身是治天下之本, Wang 110). This is not only because he needs to set a good example to his subjects to follow in order to be authentic, but also because, as Fang Jun put it: “in Lü’s book governing oneself and governing the country are skills of the same type” (在呂書中治身、治國乃一理之術, Fang 65).

What does self-cultivation exactly mean? In the *Lüshi Chunqiu* it is intense, critical analysis of one’s behavior (*biji* 必己), striving for full control of one’s desires (*qingyu* 情欲), training oneself to be mindful of others (*chawei* 察微) and unbiased in judgements (*jinting* 謹聽), it is also a path of self-education on history and the affairs of the state, so as to be able to engage with the men of learning. This seemingly very Confucian approach is coupled in the text with Daoist concepts echoing the *Laozi*:

... before overcoming others, one must overcome oneself; before judging others, one must judge oneself; before understanding others, one must understand oneself. (Tang 27)

… 欲勝人者必先自勝, 欲論人者必先自論, 欲知人者必先自知。(季春紀·先己)

As Kong Lingmei and Wu Zhaoneng underline, self-cultivation in the text is a balanced concept involving both the body and the mind (Kong & Wu 122). The authors of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* seem to believe, as shown especially in the first part of the work, the *Records* (*Ji* 紀), that the ruler’s physical condition, daily actions and habits have direct influence on his country.

Meticulous recommendations on his diet in each season not only reflect the need for ceremonial concordance of his way of life with the rhythm of Heaven and Earth, but also the fact that the balance thus preserved directly influences state politics. The ruler needs to be just about perfect in order for the country to be in the state of harmony, and for his people to live happily. Self-cultivation is a constant effort.

How far the ruler achieves self-cultivation goals is assessed by the men of virtue. They either willingly serve him and are ready for any sacrifices, or consider him ignoble and refuse to be engaged, no matter the cost of such decision (Kong & Wu 123). Three times in the text the noble hermit brothers Bo Yi (伯夷) and Shu Qi (叔齊) are invoked in this context, as virtuous men who preferred to die of starvation than serve the ruler they did not consider worthy. Section “Upholding Righteousness” of Chapter “Views on Rising Above the Worldly” (離俗覽·高義) includes anecdotes of Confucius and Mozi who each refused being engaged by rulers they considered unworthy (Tang 243-244). In the ruler – sage pair, it is the latter that is portrayed as making the active choice. The ruler can do little to recruit such a person for service. He can only try to show his virtue and hope that the lofty sage is persuaded:

Outstanding people follow an enlightened ruler. This is why an enlightened ruler does not force people to follow him but creates the conditions for people to follow him. (Tang 20)

人主賢則豪桀歸之。故聖王不務歸之者，而務其所以歸。(仲春紀·功)

The authors of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* underline two additional qualities which co-create an authentic leader: truthfulness (*xin* 信) and love of the people (*ai ren* 愛人). The entire seventh section of Chapter “Views of Rising above the Worldly” – “The Importance of Being Truthful” (離俗覽·貴信) is devoted to the first quality, as evidently shown by the title itself.⁵ Truthfulness is described as reflecting the order of Heaven and Earth: the passage of years, the rhythm of seasons, the growth of vegetation. Without truthfulness in human relations the country would be in chaos, just like the world without the years and the seasons:

⁵ The meaning of *xin* does not exactly fit that of ‘truthful’. Tang Bowen translates the same character as ‘faith’ (Tang 255) in the context of the previously paraphrased story of Duke Wen of Jin, placed in the preceding section of the same Chapter. American translators of *Lüshi Chunqiu*, John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel render *xin* in this section as ‘keeping promises’, ‘trust’, and ‘sincerity’, all on the same page of their translation (Knoblock & Riegel 500). In general, perhaps a better rendering of the term *xin* in English would be ‘trustworthiness’ or ‘reliability’.

If the ruler and his ministers are not truthful, the common people will censure them, and the country will be unstable. If the officials are not truthful, the young will not revere the old, and the noble and the lowly will scorn each other. If rewards and punishments are not meted out truthfully, people will be careless in breaking the law and cannot be put to work... By being truthful and more truthful and immersing oneself in truthfulness, one can gain access to heaven. When the people are ruled by such a person, there will be fertilizing rain and sweet dew, and the cold and hot days and the four seasons will alternate with regularity. (Tang 256-257)

君臣不信，則百姓誹謗，社稷不寧；處官不信，則少不畏長，貴賤相輕；賞罰不信，則民易犯法，不可使令...信而又信，重襲於身，乃通於天。以此治人，則膏雨甘露降矣，寒暑四時當矣。(離俗覽·貴信)

Love of the people means more than just taking good care of his subjects, a task that any responsible leader should consider his or her duty. In „Records of Mid-Autumn,” Section “Loving the People,” two anecdotes are given to illustrate the benevolence of those above, and the gratitude of those below. In the first one, Duke Mu of Qin (秦穆公) lets peasants eat his beloved horse which went astray. In the second one, Zhao Jian Zi (趙簡子) kills his favourite, white mule to cure a junior official. In both narratives, the kindness of the leaders is repaid by their subjects in battle. This is not a case of the benefits of doing good, described in previous part of this paper. Here, what is underlined is the affection of the ruler towards his subjects:

... a virtuous ruler ought to sympathize with a man in a predicament and pity a man in distress, whereby he will achieve resounding fame and win the support of the outstanding scholars of the country... Why should a ruler not practise virtue and love his people? When a ruler practices virtue and loves his people, the people will love and esteem their ruler. If the people love and esteem their ruler, they are willing to die for him. (Tang 79-80)

...賢主必憐人之困也，必哀人之窮也。如此則名號顯矣，國士得矣。... 人主其胡可以無務行德愛人乎？行德愛人則民親其上，民親其上則皆樂為其君死矣。(仲秋紀·愛士)

An authentic leader in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* strives for physical and mental perfection, is always self-conscious and mindful. He or she values truthfulness and has affection towards his or her subjects. Needless to say, other qualities described in part 3 of the paper also help build an authentic leader: moral integrity, prioritizing virtue, listening to advice from those below.

5. SERVANT LEADERSHIP IN THE *LÜSHI CHUNQIU*

The authors of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* expect the ruler to shoulder great responsibilities for the safety and wellbeing of his country. At the same time, his role is to serve the people, not rule over them in an autocratic fashion, disregarding their feelings and needs. Probably the most powerful statement in favour of moral responsibility of the leader can be found in Section “Attaching Importance to Impartiality” of the Chapter “Records of Early Spring” (孟春紀·貴公):

The world is not one person’s world; it belongs to the people of the world. The merging of Yin and Yang brings forth not only one species. Sweet dew and timely rain are not prejudiced in one thing’s favor. The master of millions of people does not show favoritism to any one person. (Tang 8)

天下非一人之天下也，天下之天下也。陰陽之和，不長一類；甘露時雨，不私一物；萬民之主，不阿一人。(孟春紀·貴公)

While the ruler is still “master of millions of people”, his position is not his own making – the power he enjoys is bestowed on him by the people (Kong & Wu 125). Chapter “Views on Being a Ruler” (恃君覽) begins with a whole essay on the origins of statehood and the role of the ruler. As Deng Shuxia well summarised it:

The authors of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* believe that establishing the ruler and founding the country have their source in the pursuit of group interests by the people. Establishing the ruler is merely a way for the people to realize their own interests. (Deng 63)

《吕氏春秋》的作者们认为设立君主、建立国家起源于人们对群聚生活利益的追求。设立君主只是人们实现自身利益的手段。

As the ruler is given power by the people, his biggest responsibility is for their safety and wellbeing. This principle holds true for leaders at all levels, including the officials:

For the long-term interests of the world, there is nothing better than enthroning a king. For the long-term interests of a state, there is nothing better than having a ruler. A ruler is acclaimed not for him to pursue selfish interests. A king is enthroned not for him to pursue selfish interests. Officials are appointed not for them to pursue selfish interests. (Tang 263)

故為天下長慮，莫如置天子也；為一國長慮，莫如置君也。置君非以阿君也，置天子非以阿天子也，置官長非以阿官長也。(恃君覽·恃君)

Because of this expectation of the people who entrust kings and officials with leadership functions, those in key positions need to act in accordance with the perceived interests of the people they serve. In Section “Complying with the Will of the People” of the Chapter “Records of Late Autumn” (季秋紀·順民) four different anecdotes are given to illustrate this point. In one of them, king Wen of Zhou (周文王) while still serving the tyrant Zhou of Shang (商紂), is given a fiefdom. He declines, asking the tyrant instead to “abolish the punishment by burning and scorching” (願為民請炮烙之刑, Tang 83). In another, king Tang of Xia (夏湯) takes the blame for five years of draught, offering himself as sacrifice for the Heavenly Emperor (*Shangdi* 上帝). As the result: “The people were pleased and a copious rain began to fall” (民乃甚說, 雨乃大至, Tang 83). The longest narrative in this section tells the story of Goujan, the king of Yue 越王勾踐 who for three years “tired both his mind and body” (苦身勞力, Tang 84) to prepare his revenge on the state of Wu.

While this very vivid narrative can be found in several other works of the period to illustrate Goujan’s willpower and unwavering devotion for the cause, in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* other aspects are underlined. Gou Jian is portrayed not as a person obsessed with revenge, but rather as a humble leader who shares his food and drink with the commoners, and personally cares after the “orphaned, widowed, aged and weak” (孤寡老弱, Tang 84). He does this to win the hearts of the people and show his leadership superiority over king Fuchai of Wu 吳王夫差. In the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, his ultimate victory over Fuchai, and the later hegemony over the Chinese states are accredited to his “winning the support of the people” first (此先順民心也, Tang 84), not to his military talent or political stratagems.

In these stories Tang, king Wen and Goujan sacrifice themselves (also literally) to the people, prioritising their interests and well-being. This is viewed not only as a correct way to govern a country but also as a way to achieve great deeds.

The leader in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* needs to be humble – a quality identified with authentic leadership. His knowledge and expertise is limited, and if he is surrounded by men of learning, they will be superior to him in many ways and will have the courage to criticise him. His power is conditional – he needs to perform well in order to win and keep the trust of the people. Without their support he might not manage to hold on to his position, as a weak, internally instable state invites enemies from the outside. As a servant to the people, the leader should put their needs first, holding his ambitions at bay.

And yet the ruler in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* is still a powerful figure, not renouncing completely from using rewards and punishments, an even tools of oppression, if necessary. But even in descriptions showing a Legalist, authoritarian side to the concept of leadership in the book, elements of servant leadership concepts are still clearly visible.

Let us turn to these parts of the text which seem less respectful and partner-oriented towards the common folk. In the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, while there is partnership between the ruler and the sages or the men of virtue, there is none between the ruler and the people. Despite him having to win their trust and show his love and care, in numerous parts of the text, the people are perceived as objects or as a resource which needs to be correctly managed. In “Views on Rising above the Worldly”, Section “Appropriate Use of Force” (離俗覽·適威), a parallel between using people and using “a fine horse” is drawn. As the anecdote about chariot drivers Dongye Ji and Zao Fu shows (Tang 252-253), the leader should not exploit or over-exhaust the people if he wants them to serve him in the long-term. This does not sound like a lesson in servant leadership. And yet, the section also contains the following explanation:

The ancient rulers of the people ruled with benevolence and righteousness, made the people live in peace by giving them love and benefits, guided them with the principles of loyalty and faith, made every effort to eliminate harms from the people and thought about bringing happiness to them. As a result, the people to the ruler were like ink paste to the seals. The ink paste was impressed with a square when a square seal was pressed on it, and impressed with a circle when a circular seal was pressed on it. (Tang 252)

古之君民者，仁義以治之，愛利以安之，忠信以導之，務除其災，思致其福。故民之於上也，若璽之於塗也，抑之以方則方，抑之以圓則圓。(離俗覽·適威)

While there clearly is no partnership between the ruler and the people, the relations remind us of a parent taking care of small children or even a farmer looking after his or her stock.⁶ While such leader does not give much floor to negotiation and discussion, this does not mean that the physical and emotional needs of the subjects are not addressed. The ruler is still outward reorienting, but he simply knows better how to make them happy, and decides for them. This approach requires insight into the human psyche,

⁶ It might be interesting to compare these concept with the allegory of the shepherd and the sheep, used exhaustively in the Bible, where servant leadership ideal is also coupled with a rigidly hierarchical management approach which the shepherd – sheep pair symbolise.

and the authors of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* propose a very pragmatic assessment of human needs and motivations. Much attention is put to harmonising the ruler's actions with the natural desires of the people, rather than trying to subdue them:

One who is good at being a ruler can satisfy the people's endless desires and thus is able to make endless use of them...This was why the sage kings in ancient times studied and acted in accordance with human nature in order to satisfy people's desires, were never disobeyed by the people and achieved success in every one of their undertakings. (Tang 254-255)

善為上者，能令人得欲無窮，故人之可得用亦無窮也。… 故古之聖王，審順其天而以行欲，則民無不令矣，功無不立矣。(離俗覽·為欲)

The leader in this approach serves the people, providing them with existential and emotional comfort, and acts in accordance with their natural desires. In return, the people follow obediently, and the leader can use them as a resource without much effort. This suggests strongly that the final objective of such servant leadership approach is successful management of resources, rather than genuine concern for others, understood in moral terms.

The last Chapter of the work, "Comments on the Scholar's Style" (士容論) is mostly devoted to farming. Farming is described as the key element of a country's economy, and therefore, is of paramount importance: "during the busy farming season, no construction work is to take place; no war is to be fought" (當時之務，不興土功，不作師徒, Tang 346). Apart from the economic side, it is also viewed as an important tool of maintaining social stability, as well as social and personal development of the people. In the following fragment from Section "Encouraging Farming" (上農) the full line of argument is visible:

Engaging the people in farming is not only for the purpose of obtaining yields from the land, but also for the purpose of improving their character. When the people are engaged in farming, they will become simple and honest. When they are simple and honest, they can be easily recruited for service. When they can be easily recruited for service, the frontiers will be secure and the ruler's position elevated. When the people are engaged in farming, they will become prudent. When they are prudent, they will talk less critically in private. When they talk less critically in private, law and order can be maintained and their strength can be concentrated. When the people are engaged in farming, their property will multiply. When their property has multiplied, they will be afraid to move. When they are afraid to move, they will stay at their home villages until they die without entertaining other thoughts. (Tang 345)

民農非徒為地利也，貴其志也。民農則樸，樸則易用，易用則邊境安，主位尊。民農則重，重則少私義，少私義則公法立，力專一。民農則其產復，其產復則重徙，重徙則死處而無二慮。（士容論·上農）

The discussion continues with showing negative consequences of the lack of proper attention by the ruler to farming, including migrations, disobedience by the subjects, or a decrease in defence capabilities of the country. We might assume that all this effort is not really for the wellbeing of the people but ultimately for the purpose of successful rulership, with as little “hassle” from the common folk as possible. After all, the policies are meant to make them “simple and honest,” “prudent” and better off, so that they stay where they are, are obedient, and concentrate on everyday tasks.

All leaders despise trouble, and having quiet, peaceful, obedient and industrious citizens seems like an end worthy of any policies which can help fulfil it. However, from the point of view of the authors of the text there isn’t necessarily any conflict between assisting in personal development and fulfilment by the people, and managing them as a resource, so that they perform to the best of their abilities within a tightly managed system. A ruler can at the same time be a servant leader loved by his people, and a head of a highly hierarchical structure with dictatorial management style and no space for partner relations.

We are faced with the dilemma of how to correctly assess leadership concepts in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* in numerous parts of the text. Are the people being manipulated? Are the authors of the text genuinely concerned about the wellbeing of the common folk? Is the ruler expected to position himself below those whom he serves, or is it just a pose, a stratagem to make his rule more successful? The tension between Legalist, top-down, pragmatic approach, Daoist servant and *wuwei* ideals, as well as Confucian responsibility and ethical standards is present throughout the text.

CONCLUSION

Modern value-based leadership theories are a useful tool to categorise leadership approaches emulated by the authors of the *Lüshi Chunqiu*. It is a heterogeneous text, and various traditions of thought are visible in different parts of the work, creating the impression of a multifaced theory of how to be a successful ruler using a variety of tools and strategies. The authors of the text renounce idealistic views of the human condition

or politics. Instead, they underline the need to understand human limitations, imperfections, natural desires, as well as power politics and war. This does not prevent them from promoting high moral standards, a fact easily glossed over if one were to focus on harsh recommendations on how to control the people which to today's reader might sound manipulative and cynical. The larger context of the text is not so. Means of control and influence are part of a large toolbox, but are not dominant. The ideal leader in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* is not a tyrant, but a responsible, well-educated and humble person who perceives moral integrity as a necessary element of his or her rulership.

The ideal ruler (presumed to be a man) exhibits most of the qualities described in the modern VBL model. He is a credible role model, as virtuous and talented individuals flock together at court, and he enjoys strong support of the people. He is self-aware, humble, and self-cultivating, promoting qualities which also form an integral part of his own life and daily behaviour. He acts in a highly ethical way, feeling moral responsibility for his subjects and his country, setting a moral standard for others to follow. He advocates long-term management perspective, taking into account all stakeholders: court officials, men of virtue, the common folk. His actions and decisions, while ultimately aim at fulfilling his own leadership goals, are outward re-oriented, helping his subjects grow and develop. He gives a lot of space to open critique and autonomous decisions of experts and sages, to whom he delegates his power.

Such recommendations might sound utopian, but the authors of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* provide a wealth of arguments to support the theory that in fact these actions and moral stance of the ruler are a very practical recipe for success both for him and his country. To strengthen the persuasive force of the argument, numerous historical *exemplae* and anecdotes are invoked, and this additionally helps the modern reader to decipher true meaning of the lessons of leadership from more than 2250 years ago. The *Lüshi Chunqiu* is not only a fascinating read presenting the very essence of Chinese pre-imperial thought, but also a valuable historical material in modern research on value-based leadership.

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LÜSHI CHUNQIU
AND THE VALUE-BASED LEADERSHIP MODEL
IN ANCIENT CHINA

Summary

The paper presents an analysis of the concepts of leadership in the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, a 3rd century B.C. text which integrates elements of various schools of political thought of pre-imperial China and thus can be considered as representative of the period. The analysis uses the framework of value-based leadership (VBL) borrowed from modern organisational psychology and leadership studies. Ancient Chinese concepts of leadership are analysed using textual evidence from the *Lüshi Chunqiu* in three VBL dimensions: ethical, authentic, and servant leadership. The ideal leader in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* is not a tyrant, but a responsible, well-educated and humble person who perceives moral integrity as a necessary element of his rulership, exhibiting most of the qualities described in the modern VBL model. He is a credible role model, enjoying the strong support of the people and surrounded by virtuous and talented individuals, highly motivated to serve him. Such a leader advocates a long-term management perspective, and is strongly supportive of his subjects' personal development. He gives plenty of space to open critique and the autonomous decisions of experts and sages to whom he delegates his power. In the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, such a VBL approach is considered far more effective in the long-term than transactional leadership or rule by force and coercion. Therefore, it is recommended in the text not only on moral, but also pragmatic grounds as a practical recipe for success, both for the ruler and for his country.

Keywords: value-based leadership; VBL; servant leadership; *Lüshi Chunqiu*; pre-imperial Chinese thought; pre-Qin texts; Warring States political thought.

LÜSHI CHUNQIU
I MODEL PRZYWÓDZTWA OPARTEGO NA WARTOŚCIACH
W STAROŻYTNYCH CHINACH

Streszczenie

Artykuł prezentuje analizę koncepcji przywództwa w *Lüshi Chunqiu*, tekście z III wieku p.n.e., integrującym elementy różnych szkół myśli politycznej przedcesarskich Chin, tym samym mogącym być uznany za reprezentatywny dla tego okresu. W analizie wykorzystano zasady przywództwa opartego na wartościach (VBL), zapożyczone z nowoczesnej psychologii organizacji i badań nad przywództwem. Starożytne chińskie koncepcje przywództwa są analizowane przy użyciu dowodów tekstowych z *Lüshi Chunqiu* w trzech wymiarach VBL: etycznym, autentycznym i służebnym. Idealny przywódca w *Lüshi Chunqiu* nie jest tyranem, ale osobą odpowiedzialną, dobrze wykształconą i skromną, która uczciwość moralną postrzega jako niezbędny element swojego panowania, wykazując większość cech opisanych we współczesnym modelu VBL. Jest wiarygodnym wzorem do naśladowania, cieszącym się silnym poparciem ludzi i oto-

czanym przez cnotliwe i utalentowane osoby, wysoce zmotywowane do służenia mu. Taki lider opowiada się za długofalową perspektywą zarządzania i silnie wspiera rozwój osobisty swoich poddanych. Daje sporo miejsca na otwartą krytykę i autonomiczne decyzje ekspertów i mędrców, którym deleguje swoją władzę. Takie podejście obecne w *Lüshi Chunqiu* jest w VBL uważane za o wiele bardziej skuteczne na dłuższą metę niż przywództwo transakcyjne lub rządy siły i przy-musu. Dlatego zaleca się je w tekście nie tylko na gruncie moralnym, ale i pragmatycznym jako praktyczną receptę na sukces zarówno władcy, jak i jego kraju.

Słowa kluczowe: przywództwo oparte na wartościach; VBL; przywództwo służebne; *Lüshi Chunqiu*; przedcesarska myśl chińska; myśl polityczna walczących państw.