

**ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND
CHINESE CULTURE:
LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM
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Emperor Taizhong v Wei Zheng



Zhen Guan Zheng Yao 《貞觀政正》



Outline

- Reign of Zhen Guan (627-649) (貞觀之治) rich legacy of Chinese ethical leadership
- Emperor Taizhong (唐太宗), ministers, esp. Wei Zheng (魏徵)
- Chinese ethical leadership: philosophical and practical component
- ZG Followership
- Comparing with modern concepts
- Relevance of ZG leadership

Philosophical part

benign mix of ideas of

- Yujia (儒家) (Confucianism)
- Fajia (法家) (Legalism)
- Daojia (道家) (Daosim)

Practical part

- *Ideas and practice of Taizhong & Co.*
- *Zhen Guan Zheng Yao* (《貞觀政要》)
documented Emperor Taizhong's leading and advices of ministers
- *Di Fan* (《帝范》)

Zhen Guan leadership

- Zhen Guan leadership entails followership element
- How ethical leadership is related to modern leadership (West) , esp. service leadership
- relevance of ethical leadership to modern Chinese societies.

Taizhong said -1

- “The way of the emperor is to preserve his people. Harming his own people to satisfy his desires is like eating the flesh of the thigh to fill up the stomach. ...
- If he wants the country to be peaceful and stable, he should rectify himself as a role model for his people, because an upright body would not cast a crooked shadow, an able ruler who governs well would not produce a chaotic and ruinous country.”
(The Way of the Emperor)(君道第一)
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Taizhong said -2

- “The emperor and his ministers ought to share the governing responsibilities in good times and bad times, If the emperor accepts honest and sincere advices, his ministers are courageous to speak the truth, then there is perfect alignment of hearts and minds ...”

(君臣鑑戒第六)

Leadership Attributes: (*Zhen Guan Zheng Yao*)

Recognize the Way of the emperor (*Jun dao*, 君道)

- emperor as source; ministers as streams
- play exemplary role

Affirming the mutual dependence of the ruler and the ruled
(*xian cun bai xing*, 先存百姓)

- as arms to the emperor (as body), be good to people

Sustaining an adversity awareness

- (*you huan yi shi*, 憂患意識); in times of comfort and peace, think danger and crisis (*ju an si wei*, 居安思危)

Leadership Attributes 2

Frugality and assiduousness

- Refraining from imperial extravagance ; Being constantly diligent ; not lazy, inattentive and lax.

Taking history seriously

- understanding the causes of the rise and fall of dynasties.
- History as shining mirror, only for those who uses it

Search and recruit talents

- search and recruit able and ethical people regardless of political, imperial associations, social background or blood ties

Leadership Attributes 3

Ability to identify the able and the inept

- Know people's talents and ability.
- Fang Xun Ling (房玄齡), Du Ru Hui (杜如悔), Wei Zheng (魏徵), Wang Gui(王珪)) offered honest and good advices.

Encourage voice in bureaucracy

- Show ministers that speaking the truth is a safe, obligatory and honorable,
- created trust between himself and his ministers.
- Nurture culture of speaking truth to power.

Able and willing to accept advices

- accepted advices from his remonstrators,
- encouraged remonstrators to speak the truth & gave direct and honest advices
- Wei Zheng, gave 200 advices

Leadership Attributes 4

Engaging collaborations with ministers

- ministers as arms n elbows.
- as interdependent and collaborative whole.
- strengthen the bond, mutual trust and emotion affinity.

Generous to assign credits

- self-knowledge and humility to assign credits to deserving ministers
- reward helped to garner support, it served justice as well.

Build institutions of decision making & enforce fair laws

- central decision making body Zhongshu Sheng (中書省), Menxia Sheng(門下省) n Shengshu Sheng (尚書省) departs, to provide the checks and balances , balanced and deliberative decisions.
- a supervisory body Yushitai (御史臺)to monitor administrations

ZHEN GUAN LEADERSHIP

- Emperor Taizhong's leadership developed and matured as a result of accepting and practicing advises from ministers in collaborative governance
- **ESSENCE**
- enlightened monarchy aided by able and moral ministers, buttressed by collaborative governance and deliberative decision making, error preventing and detecting remonstrative mechanism, and effective control system of fair laws and codes.
- philosophical leadership in political practice

PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS

Taizhong's leadership virtues : practical realization of amalgamated ideas from (see Appendix)

- *Yujia*, governance with virtues (to rule with virtues (*yi de zhi guo*, 以德治國), compassion and appropriateness (*ren yi li guo*, 仁義立國))
- *Daojia*, universal and all-encompassing principle of governance (*Dao*) and doing things
- *Fajia*: efficacy of laws and norms, rewards/punishment

Leader

- political version of Yujia's *Junzi* (君子) practicing Fajia's statecraft
- political Junzi with Yujia virtues and sentiments and Fajia's political acumen of using power to influence, control, intimidate and dominate

Junzi Leader

- Ideal person embodies and practices core elements of ren仁, yi義, li禮, zhi智, xin信
- Junzi as wind, people as grass, grass bend under wind blow (*feng xing cao yan*, 風行草偃)
- Moral role model

Fajia Leader

Basic elements of statecraft:

- *Fa* 法: coercive law, statutes and decrees enforceable by state
- *Shu* 術: techniques of power to achieve goals and influence subordinates and adversaries
- *Shi* 勢: power position in state/political hierarchy
- Reward and punishment (兩柄)

Daojia Principles

- To rule wisely, leaders should understand *Dao*, and act accordingly, because *Dao is the Way*.
- “Follow Dao, reflect on the dao behind human affairs, investigate, examine, and compare these things, ...Be empty, quiet, and retiring, never put yourself forward. ..Trust others but never be like them, and then the myriad people will follow you as one man.”(Daodejing)
- Rule and lead like water n valley(上善若水)

What is FOLLOWERSHIP

“follower”:

- =“subordinate “: passive, dependent, obedient, submissive, conformist, apathetic, isolated, withdrawn and alienated (old vision)
- active, independent, contributing, participating, collaborating, engaging, influencing (new vision)

followership is *role* rather than agent, and followers and leaders share common purpose, and significant relational dynamism btn F&L

Zhen Guan followership

- Wei Zhen's memorial to Emperor Taizhong: "I heard that the emperor is like a person's head and his ministers are like the arms and legs. Only when the head and legs and arms are well-coordinated can there be a whole person. ..though the head is precious, it need the support of the arms and legs to form a functioning body. Though able and intelligent, the emperor still needs his ministers to help run the country." (君臣鑑戒第六)

ZG followers(remonstrators)attributes

- Participatory
- Collaborative
- Active
- integrity
- Knowledge/expertise to advise, sharing common goal with leader
- courageous to speak truth to power

Zhen Guan leadership

- good leadership +
 - good followership
- Zhen Guan leadership

Comparing Old v New

- International findings broadly consistent with the characteristics of Chinese ethical leadership
- **personal attributes**: compassionate, honest, trustworthy, fair and principled, and have integrity.
- **ethical behavior**: care about others and society, behave ethically in private and public, ethically guiding others and as moral role models

Difference

- Junzi 's *zhong shu* 忠恕: means more than Western golden rule (“do not treat others in ways that you do not like to be treated”(己所不欲，勿施於人) (*Lunyu*: Yan Yuan, 12:2)
- “When you want to established your moral self, you should as well help others to establish their moral selves; when you want to accomplish your goal you should help others to accomplish their goals.”(己欲立而立人，己欲達而達人)(*Lunyu*: Yung Ya,6:30)).

Service leadership

- Service leadership 12 sides: expertise, daily management, health, intellectual, happiness, security, habitat, character, compassion, relationship, trustworthiness, maturation
- *character* and *compassion* overlap with Chinese ethical leadership core attributes of *ren* and other cardinal virtues

Concluding Remarks

- Leadership is a deeply human enterprise.
- To be human is deeply moral.
- Ethical leadership is critical to the success of good organizations and nations.