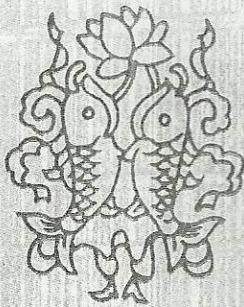


范蠡養魚經



FAN LI
ON PISCICULTURE

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ФАНЬ ЛИ О РАЗВЕ-
ДЕНИИ РЫБЫ

TRAITE DE FAN LI
SUR LA PISCICULTURE

FAN LI SOBRE LA
PISCICULTURA

First, dig a fishpond six mu² in area with nine islets in it. Then get twenty female carp filled with eggs and four male carp, all measuring three feet³ long. Put them gently into the water without making a splash on the seventh day of the second month⁴ of the year and you can rest assured that the carp will survive. Put into the pond one soft-shelled turtle in the fourth month, two in the sixth month and three in the eighth month. Soft-shelled turtles are put into the pond because the flood dragon will take the lead in flying away with the carp in tow as soon as the number of the carp exceeds 360 and the presence of soft-shelled turtles in the pond will prevent this happening. Around the nine islets in the pond the carp will swim on and on as if living in rivers and lakes. By the second month of the second year, there will be 15,000 one-foot long carp, 45,000 three-foot long carp and 10,000 two-foot long carp. As each carp is worth 50 coppers⁵, the whole lot when sold will bring in 1,250,000 coppers (sic)⁶. By the third year, there will be 100,000 one-foot long carp, 50,000 two-foot long carp, 50,000 three-foot

long carp and 40,000 four-foot long carp. Keeping 2,000 two-foot long carp for reproduction, you can sell the rest for 5,150,000 coppers (sic). By the fourth year ... the proceeds from the sale will amount to a stupendous sum."

Thereupon the prince of Qi gave orders for a fishpond to be dug in the back of the imperial gardens. Within one year, he made a profit of over 300,000 coppers. There were nine islets in the pond and between the islets there were eight deep pits. The water in the pond was two feet deep while that in the pits was six feet deep.

Carp were chosen because they did not eat their young. Besides, they grew rapidly to their full size and commanded a good price.

Notes

1. Mr Zhu of Tao: an alias taken by Fan Li. Fan Li, also named Shao Bo, whose dates are unknown, was a native of Wan in the kingdom of Chu (present-day Nanyang County, Henan Province) towards the end of the Spring and Autumn Period (5th century B.C.). He once served as a senior official in the kingdom of Yue and was later promoted commander in chief. According to "Biographies of Tradesmen" in "Historical Records", after he helped Yue to conquer the kingdom of Wu,

Fan Li resigned office, "travelled far and wide on a boat, changing his name from place to place, known as Chiyi Zipi in Qi and Mr Zhu in Tao".

Prince Wei of Qi: monarch of the kingdom of Qi (356-320 B.C.)

Since Prince Wei of Qi and Fan Li lived a hundred years apart from each other, there must be an error in the records.

2. *mu*: a unit of area. A *mu* in the Zhou Dynasty is equal to 1.89 a.

3. feet: A foot in the Zhou Dynasty is equal to 0.231 m.

4. the second month: the second month in the Zhou calendar, or two months backwards, the twelfth month in the lunar calendar. The months mentioned below are all in the Zhou calendar.

the seventh day: In the ancient Chinese calendar, dates were numbered according to an elaborate system of the ten heavenly stems and twelve earthly branches. There was a seventh day in each of the three periods of ten days in a month.

5. coppers: ancient Chinese currency

6. 1,250,000 coppers: This is erroneous when the sum is reckoned according to the number of the carp. So is the figure 5,150,000 below.

Fan Li on Pisciculture

Prince Wei of Qi, who had courteously enlisted the services of the revered Mr Zhu of Tao¹, said to him:

"I've heard that you were known as Yufu on Lake Taihu, as Chiyi Zipi in Qi, as Chijingzi among the ethnic Rong in the northwest and as Fan Li in Yue. Is all this true?"

"Yes," replied the revered Mr Zhu.

At that the prince again said:

"The working capital at your disposal runs into millions and you have amassed a fortune of hundreds of millions. Pray tell me the secret of your success."

"Well," said Mr Zhu, "there are five ways to build up a large fortune and the most important one is pisciculture. By pisciculture I mean the artificial rearing of fish in a pond.