

Study on the Academic Value of the Manuscript *Fenmensuosuilu*¹

ETUDE SUR LA VALEUR ACADÉMIQUE DU SCRIPT FENMENSUOSUILU

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Abstract: The book *Fenmensuosuilu* was written by Wen Ge, who lived in early time of the Southern Song Dynasty. It includes the enhanced parts of Chen Ye, a famous writer in the Mid-term of Southern Song. Most of the contents quoted by *Sikuquanshu* and other ancient books come from the original texts of *Fenmensuosuilu*. The agricultural part of *Fenmensuosuilu* enlarges agricultural work fields, and it has an active effect on establishing a greater agricultural framework. Most of items in this part reflect the actual agricultural situations between Song Dynasty and Yuan Dynasty, some of which can rewrite the conclusions of the agriculture history. It also provides more evidence for the research on some ancient books.

Keywords: *Fenmensuosuilu*; greater agricultural framework; agriculture history

Résumé: Le livre *Fenmensuosuilu* est écrit par Wenge, qui vivait au début de la dynastie Song du Sud. Il englobe des écrits de Chenye, un écrivain célèbre dans le mi-parcours de la dynastie Song du Sud. *Sikuquanshu* (四庫全書) et d'autres livres anciens ont cité des textes originaux de *Fenmensuosuilu*. La partie agricole de *Fenmensuosuilu* élargit les domaines des travaux agricoles, et il a un effet actif sur la construction d'un cadre de l'agriculture à grande échelle. La plupart des articles dans cette partie reflètent la situation réelle de l'agriculture entre la dynastie Song et la dynastie Yuan, dont certains peuvent réécrire l'histoire de l'agriculture. Il peut offrir également plus de preuves pour les recherches sur certains anciens livres.

Mots-clés: *Fenmensuosuilu* (分門瑣碎錄); cadre de l'agriculture à grande échelle; histoire de l'agriculture

Fenmensuosuilu written by Wen Ge appropriately in Shaoxing Period (1131—1162) of the Southern Song Dynasty was an ancient agricultural book that had been neglected for a long time. Early 1960s Shanghai Library collected a manuscript in late Ming and early Qing dynasties and then copied a number of copies afterwards, and collected the farm class of the sub-volume of *Xuxiusikuquanshu*. Although quite a few scholars highly appreciate the manuscript, there has been no specific research focusing on this topic with

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possible reason of just very few copies available only. This paper intends to consolidate some academic values of *Fenmensuosuilu*, hoping this rare ancient farm book to gain attentions from more scholars.

Hu Daojing (1963) briefly assessed Manuscript *Fenmensuosuilu* and believed it could adequately cover the gap between *Sishizuan Yao* written by Han Er in Tang Dynasty and *Zhongyibiyong* written in Yuan Dynasty and make the agricultural history of ancient China more complete. Shu Yinglan (1993) then compared *Fenmensuosuilu* with *Nongshu* written by Chen Fu in the same period, and believed *Nongshu* “highlighted farming, rice cultivation, and sericulture and operational management”; yet *Fenmensuosuilu* “focused on agricultural production technology discussions featuring the planting of bamboo, flowers, and fruits and vegetables as its most exiting part”. They are perfectly complementary in the fields discussed, “comparing with *Nongshu*, *Fenmensuosuilu* is therefore by no means inferior.” Mr. Shu conducted a complete survey of referring proportions of *Zhongyibiyong*, *Zhongyibiyong* Supplement, and *Zhongshushu* from *Fenmensuosuilu*. Based on the fact that the referring proportions are 75%, 52%, and 96% respectively, Mr. Shu believes that *Fenmensuosuilu* played an important role to continue with the past and open up the future in traditional agricultural technology. He as well highly appreciated that *Fenmensuosuilu* highlighted the specific practices to reflect various agricultural technologies and systematical discussions on the technologies of flower propagations and cultivations, and believed the most of farming books could not achieve the technology-understandings in *Fenmensuosuilu*.

In addition to what Mr. Hu and Shu declared, the agricultural history values of *Fenmensuosuilu* as well reflect in following aspects:

First, it greatly enlarges the coverage of agricultural books and makes the traditional agriculture concept further expand, comparing with previous agricultural books. In view of currently available agricultural documents, the concept of greater agriculture was established gradually. The scopes involved in early agricultural documents were quite narrow such as the concepts of “well-off farmers, land using, soil identifying, and cultivation timing” discussed in *Shangshu-Yugong* Section, *Guanzi-Diyuan*, and *Lushichunqiu*, certainly grasped the top-core issues in agricultural fields, all these contents however are evidently one-sided in view of overall agriculture. *Sishengzhishu* in Western Han Dynasty that had been lost long before highly focused on crop cultivations, judging by the incomplete series available at present. Medieval agriculture discussed in *Qimenyaoshu* had established a broader concept: take current agriculture as primary entity meanwhile include industries such as animal husbandry, cultivation, brewing, aquaculture, and by-product processing as well as witchcraft, augur, and worship, almost covering all the fields in social life directly associated with agriculture. The agricultural structure determined in *Qimenyaoshu* turned the model of agricultural book creation afterwards. Based on these points, the agricultural books in past dynasties extended them to different extents, and *Sishizuan Yao* written by Han Er even extended agriculture to business and education fields. *Fenmensuosuilu* primarily contributed to flower and tree planting. *Qimenyaoshu* Preface clearly indicated Jia Sixie’s exclusive attitude toward flower and tree cultivating: “Flowers and trees can be used for pleasure only and they just have flowers but no fruits, and they are flippant and vain and thereby not worth keeping.” With social and economic prosperity in Tang and Song Dynasties, flowers and fruits gained higher and higher status in people’s hearts and plenty of gardening books came out accordingly. Based on the records in China Agricultural Book Index (2006) prepared by Wang Yuhu, there are over 30 flower planting techniques covered with well-known ones in general discussions including *Luoyanghuamuji* written by Zhou Shihou, *Quanfangbeizu* by Chen Jingyi, and *Huamulu* by Zhang Zonghui, etc; while specific discussions including *Luoyangmudanji* by Ouyang Xiu, *Tianpengmudanpu* by Lu You, *Shaoyaopu* by Kong WUzhong, *Jupu* by Shi Zhengzhi, *Baijujipu* by Shi zhu, *Jinzhanganpu* by Zhao Shigeng, *Haitangpu* by Chen Si, and *Tongpu* by Chen Zhu, etc. Based on such social and cultural background, there was nearly 60% length of the Planting Section in *Fenmensuosuilu* for discussing flower and tree cultivating techniques, which can be concluded as a major progress in comprehensive agricultural books and meanwhile enriched agricultural connotations over Southern and Northern Dynasties. The Dog and Cat Volume, General Discussion Volume, and Veterinary Volume, etc in Insects and Fish Section, Food Section, and Shepherding Section all included contents missed in previous dynasties to different extent, and therefore played a proactive role in establishing the greater agricultural structure, too.

Second, plenty of entries offer reliable evidence for agricultural technology development, or even rewrite current conclusions. A number of entries of agricultural technologies in *Fenmensuosuilu* are unavailable in the agricultural books in previous dynasties, and over half of these first-time available entries

are based on the practically concluded experiences from the agricultural productions in Song Dynasty, demonstrating new agriculture development levels of Song Dynasty from different visions. Let's take *Nongsang* Section as an example:

Wuguzonglun: in bean and hemp planting, the plants must be consumed by weeds and insects if weeding is not conducted on time, and they will not fruit much even they do. Proverb goes: "Hemps must be cultivated when they just grow while beans can still be cultivated even if they bloom".

This entry specifically analyzes weed harm in bean and hemp growing period, and firstly illustrates by quoting folk proverb the best time to weed in bean and hemp cropping.

Gu: experienced farmers say: "Lands will be worn out if they are cultivated all the time; if a bunch of grain has a number of pieces of fruits thirty years ago, now it will reduce 30%."

The theory of gradually reduced land fertility due to long time cultivations in *Fenmensuosuilu* and that of gradually enhanced land fertility because of constant cultivations in *Nongshu* by Chen Pu were just mutually opposite, co-reflecting the new understandings on land fertility in Two Song Dynasties. And the agricultural books prior to Song Dynasties had not yet conducted in-depth thinking on this issue.

In addition to *Nongsang* Section, plenty of same entries firstly seen in *Fenmensuosuilu* were as well included in various Sections, demonstrating the true picture of the agriculture in Song Dynasty from different aspects. For instance, *Zhongyi Section · Zhuzashuo* recorded methods to prevent bamboo roots from damaging bamboo joints by burying honey locust thorns or sesame stems around bamboo roots; *Zhongyi Section · Muzongshuo* proposed the methods to adjust honey locust seeding time by digging holes on tree trunks and then filling in semen momordicae; *Zhongyi Section · Zhongzhizafa* described the methods to make the bonsai of plantain attached to stones and the skills to get short plantain seedlings and let plantain roots attach to stones; *Qinshou Section · Tuo* proposed the method to judge the life of camels based on hump shapes; and *Chongyu Section · Yu* proposed the skills to use mud fishes to accompany eels so as to prevent eels from sleeping to death, use leeches to treat dying carps, install the water cabinets with sluices inside the boats shipping scallops in long distance and draw off water according to tides to keep the scallops fresh, etc. Their values, as the first-hand materials of the agriculture in Song Dynasty or even the overall ancient agricultural development history, can not be underestimated regardless of some superstitions in the practices.

Plentiful agricultural proverbs and sayings in the manuscript can be treated as the experience conclusions directly from agricultural production practices, as well the precious materials to study the agricultural situations in Song and Yuan Dynasties. And the most of them still owns positive meanings on modern agriculture and planting, such as:

Nongsang Section · Sang: it commonly used the rains in March 3rd to forecast mulberry leaf prices. Proverb said: "Mulberry leaves are expensive when it rains hard." or "March 4th is particularly expensive." Hangzhou people said "The prices in March 3rd are acceptable; those in March 4th will rip me off." The prices will be particularly expensive when it rains in March 4th.

This is the experience summary from silkworm breeders in Zhejiang Province to judge sericulture harvests based on the weather conditions in March 3 and 4. The relation between mulberry leaf prices and the weather conditions in March 3 and 4 was described even more vividly in *Tianjiawuxing*: "If it is clear in March 3, silver bottles will hang on mulberry leaves; if it drizzles, money can hardly stay still on mulberry leaves; and if it rains hardly enough to wash stones away, mulberry leaves can only be used to feed cows."

Zhongyi Section · Zhongmufa elaborated the root protections in tree transplantations: transplant trees with soil and avoid harming roots of trees as much as possible, which is the same principle as the above descriptions of "Protect the soil around the roots of trees as long as the trees are needed to transplanted, seal the roots and do not remove the soil there, which make trees easier to survive". Today, it still strictly follows this principle of transplanting trees with the soil around the roots when transplanting trees, particularly famous and precious or low surviving rate trees.

From document vision, manuscript *Fenmensuosuilu* as well owns precious values. Originally *Fenmensuosuilu* was a reference book and its most parts of materials in theory are supposed to have earlier literature sources. The author conducted a rough statistics on its quotations from previous and the same generation books and records as follows:

After consolidations and adjustments there are totally 479 entries, among which there are 20 parts in the manuscript with clearly indicated quotations from source documents, and over 20 ancient documents being referred include: *Huainanzi*, *Yinyangshu*, *Sishengzhishu*, *Zawuxingshu*, *Zhiling*, *Shilinbishuluhua*, *Yuezhoufengtuji*, *Paozhilun*, *Huamuji*, *Bencao*, *Niepanjing*, *Guangya*, *Youyangzazu*, *Jiazhengling*, *Yangyujing*, *Erya*, *Baijili*, and *Baopuzi*, etc.

There are nearly 110 quotations with no clearly indicated source documents referred yet can be found based on currently existing books and references, and there are nearly 30 referred documents include *Qimanyaoshu*, *Sishizuan*, *Youyangzaizu*, *Gujinzhushu*, *Bowuzhi*, and *Suitangjiahua*, etc.

There about 120 parts with no indicated quotations but can be verified with currently existing documents of the same time then, and approximately 30 documents had been involved.

Based on currently existing ancient books and references, the rest some 230 entries can be primarily determined to be initially introduced in *Fenmensuosuilu*, among which there are over 70 entries that had never been quoted by other documents in the same or later generations.

The statistical data above fully indicates the values of *Fenmensuosuilu* in ancient literature research: quote over 80 ancient books and references in or before Two Song Dynasties, and quite a few of them had lost such as *Yinyangshu*, *Paozhilun*, and *Huamuji*, etc; meanwhile about half entries had been widely quoted in later documents, especially in agricultural documents. It is clear that *Fenmensuosuilu* offers more bases for collating and consolidating relevant ancient books and references. Take Hu Daojing-collated *Zhongyibiyong* as an example:

Entry 38: It is unnecessarily constrained by seasons when planting vegetables; it can plant as soon as no more vegetables, and it is easy for vegetable productions in this way.

“牙” is the handwriting error of “才”. Textbook *Fenmensuosuilu*· *Zhongyi* Section· *Zhongcaifa*: “It is unnecessarily constrained by seasons when planting vegetables; it can plant as soon as no more vegetables, and it is easy for vegetable productions in this way.” *Zhongshushu*· *Cai* took it as “纒”, and this can also be used as a proof. “才” and “纒” belong to simplified and traditional Chinese characters respectively in terms of modern Chinese characters yet informal and formal characters in modern Chinese period. “牙” and “才” share similar font and therefore can easily be confused. It was incorrectly transcribed in *Zhongzhibiyong* and collated version didn’t find out, a clear observation error.

Entry 70: Fill lilac daphne or stemonae leafs in the holes of fruit trees if there are insects.

Answer: “或出纳部叶” here does not make sense. This entry was firstly seen in *Fenmensuosuilu*· *Zhongyi* Section· *Zhiguomufa*: “Fill lilac daphne in the holes of fruit trees if there are insects. Or it is said: Stemona leafs as well work.” Therefore, “出” here is the font mistake of “云”, it is advisable to add a “,” after the correction. The missed character “百” before “部” as well needs to be supplemented. “百部” is a type of vine with years of growing period with alkaloids in most of its roots, it thereby has insect-killing function. Its leaves as well were commonly used to kill various destructive insects. “百部” also appeared in *Bowenlu* and *Zhongshushu*· *Guo* that had been quoted by *Sangnongjiyao*· *Guoshi*· *Zhuguo*, and all of these can be used as evidence.

Entry 127: It can not over-irrigate when peonies will bloom. Peonies bloom late when soil is cold. It needs to trim flowers as quickly as possible, and the flowers will not get hurt in this way.

Answer: “花床” here doesn’t fit the meaning, and the “床” was the mistake of “体”. Textbook *Fenmensuosuilu*· *Zhongyi* Section· *Jiaohuafa*: “It can not over-irrigate when peonies will bloom. Peonies bloom late when soil is cold. It needs to trim flowers as quickly as possible, and the flowers will not get hurt in this way.” In Song Dynasty, the formal character of “体”, standing for body, was “體”, and there was also simplified informal character “体” occurred then, the manuscript copy person happened to confuse “床” with “体”, causing the error in this entry.

The most part of the entries in the manuscript that had not been found in any books and references are supposed to come from the agricultural documents in Two Song Dynasties. Based on the statistics from China Agricultural Book Index, there were over 100 agricultural books in Song Dynasty that had been found in various books and records. And unfortunately the most of them had not been handed down. The

over 70 entries in *Fenmensuosuilu* only can therefore be considered to offer later generations a unique window. And we can still pry the ancient agricultural books by the aid of manuscript *Fenmensuosuilu* after vicissitudes in thousands of years, it indeed is grateful, isn't it?

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