



## Bing: From Farmer's Son to Magistrate in Han China

By Michael Loewe

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**Bing: From Farmer's Son to Magistrate in Han China** By Michael Loewe

Much is known of life during the Han Empire, but the historical evidence remains fragmentary, and nowhere do we find a continuous account of the life of any one individual.

In this engaging volume, Michael Loewe mines the written and material records to depict the imagined life of an ordinary person, Bing Wu, from the hardships of his earliest years on a rural farm to his retirement from a respected position in government service. Underlying the tale of Bing is a richly detailed portrait of life during the Han--the arduous tasks of the conscript laborer; military service on the defense lines of the north; the travels of a merchant; the grueling conditions in an iron foundry; the construction of tombs; preparations for entering the civil service; the duties of a junior clerk and the governing of a commandery. Along the way, we are introduced to the operation of a crossbow; methods of telling time; the practice of writing; the rituals of divination; the ceremony of a state occasion, laws and the harsh consequences of breaking them; the workings of the central government and much more.

Included are a concise introduction, explanatory endnotes to each chapter, a selection of illustrations, a map of the Han Empire, notes for further reading and an essay by Loewe entitled, "A Brief History of the Han Empire."

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# Bing: From Farmer's Son to Magistrate in Han China

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

q>Only a master of the history of the early empires in China such as Michael Loewe could have spun this story tracing the gradual rise of a sympathetic character from plow boy to the official ranks at the Han court. Teachers will surely want to assign it to their students, as it perfectly illustrates key points that Loewe has made in more academic publications, for example, his *Everyday Life in Early Imperial China* during the Han Period 202 BC-AD 220. Comparative historians will find a wealth of information in it, including helpful notes suggesting further readings. Bing is as good as it gets in historical fiction. --Michael Nylan, University of California, Berkeley

Fascinating account of Han society and social morality. Enjoyable to read. Great supplement for courses on traditional China. --Sue Fawn Chung, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

This book is wonderful. Only someone with Loewe's deep and broad knowledge could provide such a work of historical fiction that gives life to the gleanings of historical research that are too scattered and incomplete for the less skilled to harvest. Add to this the interesting story and this makes for an effective, useful supplementary reading for courses on Chinese history. --Steven Davidson, Southwestern University

#### About the Author

Michael Loewe is an Emeritus Fellow of Clare Hall. From 1963 to 1990, he was University Lecturer in Chinese Studies at the University of Cambridge. He has served as Visiting Professor at Harvard University and The University of Chicago.

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