



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

*Michael Loewe*

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