

DEDICATORY NOTE

As editor of *Asia Major* I wish to add my own personal tribute to Michael Loewe as the doyen of Han historians.

Not only is Michael my oldest friend in the profession – our careers have intersected for almost sixty years since we worked together at the end of World War II; he is a scholar whose still-growing achievements I greatly admire. Since the 1960s his name has become almost synonymous with Han history. He was the first western historian of ancient China to seize fully the novel opportunities that Chinese archaeology has provided, enabling us to transform the old text based knowledge of the ancient period and of Han China with tangible evidence – including new textual materials – revealed by excavations. Fifty years ago our visual image of Han China was still indistinct; it is now broader and more vivid than that for almost any period. He has opened up new paths in administrative history, and in the difficult fields of religious beliefs about the afterlife and mythology.

In his lifetime a talented new generation of historians of ancient China has emerged both in China and in the West, many of them his students, and all of them under his influence. They have created what is at present the liveliest, most diversified and most innovative field of Chinese historical scholarship. The essays in this Festschrift bear witness to their (and his) achievement. *Asia Major* is privileged to publish them.

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