



The Rise of the Chinese Empire: Frontier, Immigration, and Empire in Han China, 130 B.C.-A.D.157

By Chun-shu Chang

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The second and first centuries B.C. were a critical period in Chinese history—they saw the birth and development of the new Chinese empire and its earliest expansion and acquisition of frontier territories.

But for almost two thousand years, because of gaps in the available records, this essential chapter in the history was missing. Fortunately, with the discovery during the last century of about sixty thousand Han-period documents in Central Asia and western China preserved on strips of wood and bamboo, scholars have been able, for the first time, to put together many of the missing pieces.

In this second volume of his monumental history, Chun-shu Chang provides the first systematic reconstruction of the history of the acquisitions and colonization undertaken by the Chinese empire. In never before seen detail, Chang discusses the actions taken by the Chinese empire to develop the Han frontier: the government promoted massive immigration to the newly conquered virgin land; an innovative and complex garrison system was created; and civil institutions and a land system, as well as a regular imperial administration, were established over the region. Chang investigates the long and massive campaigns of the Han territorial expansion movement, considers the impact of early nation-building, and explores the formation and growth of the Chinese empire and its changing national identity. Chang's comprehensive reconstruction of ancient and early Imperial Chinese history, based on literary, archaeological, and recently discovered ancient texts and classics, reveals the process and mechanics of the Han frontier development through an innovative and complex system of colonization, the core mechanics of the Han empire-building enterprise.

Chun-shu Chang is Professor of History at the University of Michigan and is the author, with Shelley Hsueh-lun Chang, of *Crisis and Transformation in Seventeenth-Century China* and *Redefining History: Ghosts, Spirits, and Human Society in P'u Sung-ling's World, 1640 – 1715*.

"An extraordinary survey of the political and administrative history of early imperial China, which makes available a body of evidence and scholarship otherwise inaccessible to English-readers. The underpinning of research is truly stupendous."

—Ray Van Dam, Professor, Department of History, University of Michigan

"Powerfully argues from literary and archaeological records that empire, modeled on Han paradigms, has largely defined Chinese civilization ever since."

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Editorial Review

About the Author

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