



The Rise of the Chinese Empire: Nation, State, and Imperialism in Early China, ca. 1600 B.C.-A.D. 8

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 first volume of his monumental history, Chun-shu Chang uses these newfound documents to analyze the ways in which political, institutional, social, economic, military, religious, and thought systems developed and changed in the critical period from early China to the Han empire (ca. 1600 B.C. – A.D. 220). In addition to exploring the formation and growth of the Chinese empire and its impact on early nation-building and later territorial expansion, Chang also provides insights into the life and character of critical historical figures such as the First Emperor (221– 210 B.C.) of the Ch'in and Wu-ti (141– 87 B.C.) of the Han, who were the principal agents in redefining China and its relationships with other parts of Asia. As never before, Chang's study enables an understanding of the origins and development of the concepts of state, nation, nationalism, imperialism, ethnicity, and Chineseness in ancient and early Imperial China, offering the first systematic reconstruction of the history of Chinese acquisition and colonization.

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.”

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

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