

A Chinese Pioneer Family: The Lins of Wu-feng, Taiwan, 1729-1895 (Studies of the East Asian Institute)

By Johanna Margarete Menzel Meskill

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In an absorbing account of a frontier family's rise to local eminence, from pioneer hardship to gentry affluence, Johanna Meskill presents not just a family history but a social history of late imperial China. The narrative centers on a half dozen major figures whose fame or infamy shaped family fortunes and is interwoven with an analysis of several larger themes: the dynamics of the settlement process; the role of violence in popular culture; patterns of upward mobility; the continuing vigor of gentry culture. Available for the first time in paperback, this History Book Club selection includes numerous illustrations from family and other contemporary sources. "It is a piece of local historical research . . . yet it is also a book about all of Taiwan and indeed all of China-as good a book as we are likely to encounter for some time."-Eric Widmer, Brown University, History Book Club prospectus. "Meskill's aim in this book was to look at Chinese society and history from the ground up rather than, as is usually the case, from the top down. . . . In this, she has succeeded brilliantly. There is, as yet, no other work with a comparable perspective."-Edward Rhoads, History "Possibly the best historical account of a Chinese gentry family (aside from autobiographical and fictional renditions) available in the English language . . . a milestone in the field of Chinese local history."-Harry Lamley, Journal of Asian Studies "A major addition to the expanding field of Ch'ing Chinese Studies." -Ching-chih Chen, American Historical Review Johanna Menzel Meskill is Professor of History at Herbert H. Lehman College, The City University of New York. Sponsored by the East Asian Institute, Columbia University

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