This is a fascinating account of frontier Stalinism told through the previously unexplored history of a campaign to attract female settlers to the socialist frontiers of the Soviet Far East in the late 1930s. Elena Shulman reveals the instrumental part these migrants played in the extension of Soviet state power and cultural dominion in the region. Their remarkable stories, recovered from archival letters, party documents, memoirs, press coverage, and films, shed new light on Soviet women’s roles in state formation, the role of frontier Stalinism in structuring gender ideals, and the nature of Soviet society and Stalinism in the 1930s. Through these narratives, Elena Shulman offers a nuanced and complex picture of the “subcultures” of Stalinism – generational, regional, and semi-criminal – as well as the complexities of women’s lives under Stalin and the limits of Moscow’s rule over the periphery and even the Gulag.

Elena Shulman is an independent scholar and has taught at the University of California, Berkeley, and Texas Tech University after receiving her PhD in History from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 2004.
Stalinism on the Frontier of Empire

*Women and State Formation in the Soviet Far East*

Elena Shulman
This book is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother Charna Svider-Shulman and to my mother Zinaida Khanis-Shulman.
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Finally, I want to acknowledge Ruski, the cat, for being born one wintry night in Moscow along with the manuscript.
Glossary of terms

BAMLag  Baikal-Amur road corrective labor camp
Dal’krai  Far Eastern Region
Dal’kraispolkom  Far Eastern Regional Executive Committee
Dal’kraikom  Far Eastern Regional Committee of the VKP(b)
Dal’Lag  Khabarovsk region corrective labor camp
Dal’stroi  Far Eastern Construction Trust
delo (d.)  file or folder
fond (f.)  collection
GULAG  Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps
kolkhoz  collective farm
Komsomol  Soviet Communist Youth League
krai  region
Kraikom  Regional Committee
Kraispolkom  Regional Executive Committee
kulak  a “strong” or capitalist farmer
list (l.)  folio in archival folder
lespromkhoz  Timber Industry Enterprise
meshchanka  woman with petty-bourgeois views (connoting narrow-minded, chauvinistic or crassly materialistic in the Soviet era)
NEP  New Economic Policy
NKVD  People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs
Obkom  Oblast Committee
oblast  a territorial administrative unit similar to a county
obratnaia (ob.)  verso of numbered folio in archival folder
OKDVA  Special Red Banner Far Eastern Army
opis’ (op.)  inventory
Red Army and Fleet Houses  Communist party political instructors for officers and their families
RKKA  Worker-Peasant Red Army
### Glossary

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<tr>
<td>RSFSR</td>
<td>Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>sovkhoz</td>
<td>state-owned farm paying wages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taiga</td>
<td>subarctic evergreen coniferous forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VKP(b)</td>
<td>All-Union Communist party (Bolsheviks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VLKSM</td>
<td>Soviet Communist Youth League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhenotdel</td>
<td>Women’s Department of the Communist party</td>
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Note on the text

I have adopted a simplified version of the Library of Congress System for transliteration from the Cyrillic alphabet to the Latin alphabet. Terms and names already well known to non-Russian readers have been left in their more familiar spellings.

Idiosyncrasies in translations of primary sources and document titles have been retained to keep the flavour of Soviet bureaucratic jargon in the 1930s and forms of expression typical of this sometimes inadequately educated generation of New Soviet men and women.

Memoirs of Khetagurovites have been dated where the date is known. Undated memoirs were deposited in the Party Archive of the Khabarovsk region between 1974 and 1975.