



The Merchants of Zigong Industrial Entrepreneurship In Early Modern China Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University

By Madeleine Zelin

Columbia University Press. Paperback. Condition: New. 432 pages. Dimensions: 8.8in. x 6.0in. x 0.9in.At the periphery of the Chinese empire, a group of innovative entrepreneurs built companies that dominated the Chinese salt trade and created thousands of jobs in the Sichuan region. From its dramatic expansion in the early nineteenth century to its decline on the eve of the Sino-Japanese War in the late 1930s, salt production in Zigong was one of the largest and one of the only indigenous large-scale industries in China. Madeleine Zelin recounts the history of the salt industry to reveal a fascinating chapter in Chinas history and provide new insight into the forces and institutions that shaped Chinese economic and social development independent of Western or Japanese influence. Her book challenges long-held beliefs that social structure, state extraction, the absence of modern banking, and cultural bias against business precluded industrial development in China. Zelin details the novel ways in which Zigong merchants mobilized capital through financial-industrial networks. She describes how entrepreneurs spurred growth by developing new technologies, capturing markets, and building integrated business organizations. Without the state establishing and enforcing rules, Zigong businessmen were free to regulate themselves, utilize contracts, and shape their industry. However,...



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