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“The JinPu Railroad as a Regional Business Enterprise in Shandong”

Abstract

This paper explores the role of the JinPu railroad as a business institution and regional infrastructure in northern China, particularly Shandong province, from its planning stage in 1898 to the founding of the PRC in 1949. For the business historian, the analysis of railroad companies like the JinPu line offers insight into various important aspects of Chinese business history. First, the paper will show how railroad companies developed as hybrid business institutions from the late Qing throughout the Republican period by adopting “modern” forms of industrial, labor, and financial management and tried to cope with the specific technological and financial challenges of a large-scale infrastructure project. After 1927 and the founding of the Ministry of Railways (tiedao bu), the JinPu railroad became a national railroad company with strong government involvement affecting administrative hierarchies, hiring patterns, strategic planning and expansion of the political agenda of the Guomindang. Second, railroad companies as business enterprises cater to different customers in terms of freight and passenger transportation. This paper will explore the question of profitability and how the JinPu railroad company handled issues of pricing its services in the region and beyond. Finally, as a new form of infrastructure, the JinPu line also contributed to the market integration and expansion in Shandong province. The paper will discuss how this railroad impacted the business

environment in terms of attracting and servicing new agricultural producers in the countryside as well as new marketing venues such as shops, banks, and commercial organizations in Jinan city and throughout the region.