

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910460164603321
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Titolo	Empires of coal : fueling China's entry into the modern world order, 1860-1920 // Shellen Xiao Wu
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Stanford, California : , : Stanford University Press, , 2015 ©2015
ISBN	0-8047-9473-1
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (281 p.)
Collana	Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University
Disciplina	338.2/724095109034
Soggetti	Coal mines and mining - China - History - 19th century Coal mines and mining - China - History - 20th century Mines and mineral resources - China - History - 19th century Mines and mineral resources - China - History - 20th century Geology, Economic - China - History - 19th century Geology, Economic - China - History - 20th century Electronic books. China History 1861-1912 China History 1912-1928
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Front matter -- Contents -- Illustrations -- Acknowledgments -- Introduction -- 1. Fueling Industrialization in the Age of Coal -- 2. Ferdinand von Richthofen and the Geology of Empire -- 3. Lost and Found in Translation: Geology, Mining, and the Search for Wealth and Power -- 4. Engineers as the Agents of Science and Empire, 1886–1914 -- 5. Nations, Empires, and Mining Rights, 1895–1911 -- 6. Geology in the Age of Imperialism, 1890–1923 -- 7. Epilogue -- Notes -- Bibliography -- Index -- Series list
Sommario/riassunto	From 1868–1872, German geologist Ferdinand von Richthofen went on an expedition to China. His reports on what he found there would transform Western interest in China from the land of porcelain and tea to a repository of immense coal reserves. By the 1890's, European and American powers and the Qing state and local elites battled for control

over the rights to these valuable mineral deposits. As coal went from a useful commodity to the essential fuel of industrialization, this vast natural resource would prove integral to the struggle for political control of China. Geology served both as the handmaiden to European imperialism and the rallying point of Chinese resistance to Western encroachment. In the late nineteenth century both foreign powers and the Chinese viewed control over mineral resources as the key to modernization and industrialization. When the first China Geological Survey began work in the 1910's, conceptions of natural resources had already shifted, and the Qing state expanded its control over mining rights, setting the precedent for the subsequent Republican and People's Republic of China regimes. In *Empires of Coal*, Shellen Xiao Wu argues that the changes specific to the late Qing were part of global trends in the nineteenth century, when the rise of science and industrialization destabilized global systems and caused widespread unrest and the toppling of ruling regimes around the world.

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