

**On Chen Yaping's *The Pursuit of Rules and Order: A Study of Chongqing Merchant Organizations from the 18th to the 19th Century***

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This article is a book review of Chen Yaping's *The Pursuit of Rules and Order: A Study of Chongqing Merchant Organizations from the 18th to the 19th Century*. In this work, Chen Yaping responds to scholarly reflections on how to re-evaluate China's economic growth and societal development since the 16th century. He holds that research based on unexamined theoretical concepts should be abandoned. Scholars should go back to history and conduct empirical investigation into traditional Chinese industrial and commercial groups. Through a careful textual analysis of materials from the Baxian Archives, the author depicts the interaction between and integration of Chongqing merchant organizations and the state in the Qing Dynasty. He concludes that Chinese merchant organizations from the 18th to the 19th century were neither "feudal guilds" that hindered economic development nor a "public sphere" depending on market forces to oppose the ruler.

Keywords: merchant organizations, Chongqing, Baxian Archives, guild, public sphere

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