

## Comments and Questions on Papers by Maarten Prak, Luca Mocarelli, Josef Elmer

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### Questions from an non-expert with a non-European perspective

- What is a guild? Are all minced pies the same everywhere? What about rice cakes?
- The question seems to me far more difficult than it seems:
  - Chinese equivalent: Huigan, Gongsuo. Hang or Bang.
  - The formal Qing legal code has no definition on the status of such an organization or possibly any social organization.
  - Implication is that the boundary between formal organization and "secret societies" could be blurry.
  - India's early and pre-colonial commercial organization seem to bear little resemblance to the European case.
  - For Japan, terms such as stock societies and brotherhoods were used rather than "guilds".
  - Much information on Chinese and Indian "guilds" came from the 19-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Are these indigenous organization or under the Western influence?

### Are Guilds similar all around the world, or do they fulfill similar functions? Yes and No.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing transaction costs, (weights, measures and so on)</li> <li>• Quality control and reputation mechanism</li> <li>• Offering welfare to members</li> <li>• Collective action to protect property rights</li> <li>• Human Capital</li> <li>• Developing and transferring technology</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monopoly price fixing</li> <li>• Controlling quantity and market size</li> <li>• Collusion with government</li> <li>• Stifling or resisting innovation</li> <li>• The problem of narrow interest versus public interest.</li> <li>• Social control</li> </ul> |
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### Are all guilds equal? (question on Lucas's paper)

Counting the number of guilds very important work

- What is the definition of those "guilds" counted? Legal, administrative, informal? (corporate charters, corporate entities and so on).
- Are other organizations (perhaps more informal) perhaps performing similar roles? If so, what does the count of guilds indicate? Is it a measure of social capital, human capital or technology?
- Are all guilds same and equal? Do size, duration matter, Is there a need for a more complicated measure?
- The same question goes for Christine's paper.

### Guilds and Political action: patterns in the East and West

- Is European guild unique? (Prak's paper)
  - Corporate entity and legal charter
  - Political connection with the city, representation on the council or administering the city. Citizens of the city.
  - Implications: relatively stable tenure, formal organization and more importantly more likely to transcend the narrow interest. Or vice versa: more capable of resisting change when change is needed.
- The interesting case of rural guilds (Ehmer's paper): seeking autonomy from the local rule, reputation effect ("honorable work").

### Is Guild relevant for "Great Divergence" debate?

- Who has the best or better "pie"?
- The importance of mutual perspective.
  - Institutional adaptation to different political and legal environment?
  - Similar functions but different institutional possibilities.
  - Which differences matter which do not?
- Efficiency implication of different institutions?
  - Can we find a test case where East and West meet?
  - Lessons from the 19-20<sup>th</sup> century East Asia.
  - Legal reform in China and Japan
  - Giving formal status to merchant communities
  - The case of treaty port esp. Shanghai
    - A city dominated by Western merchants: mercantile representation
    - The provision of public goods, protection of property rights and security, the standardization of taxation
    - Chinese merchant community struggle for representation.
    - A contrast against merchants under warlord rule or under the "empire."