échelles non équidistantes de sept degrés. Quand cette copie de
tierce main se voit elle-même citée (p. 19) comme une “musical
notation provided by Rawski”, on se croit revenu aux pratiques de
l’à peu près et du vite dit en vigueur au xviiième siècle, dont a tant
souffert la connaissance en Europe de la musique chinoise.

Cependant, comme en un rituel de salut réussi, une forte
dramaturgie, l’ensemble de l’ouvrage, et par là peut-être la dé-
marche elle-même, trouve sa voie in extremis dans les deux essais
conclusifs, qui délaissent avec bonheur la relation au pouvoir, si
cel n’est celui d’émouvoir. Judith Magee Boltz et Ellen R. Judd
nous livrent en effet non seulement des études détaillées et
originales sur deux des plus beaux genres spectaculaires, le pudu
taoïste et les opéras de Mulian, mais elles mettent très précisé-
ment en évidence ce qui nous intéresse et nous touche dans le
rituel religieux, nous musicologues, ethnologues, anthropolo-
gues des religions, philosophes, êtres humains: cette magie, de
l’ordre du rêve, que l’art introduit, en quoi il prolonge tout
langage possible. Et cet hommage de la science et de l’écrit à
l’oral et au spectacle, à la performance, est un des plus beaux qu’il
se puisse lire.

Strasbourg

François Picard


This book by Jennifer Holmgren comprises seven collected
essays previously published in a variety of venues between 1982
and 1991. The subject matter discussed in the essays spans the
time period from the first century AD through the late 1300’s
(Later Han through Ming dynasties), with sundry remarks touch-
ing upon more recent periods. The publisher has not altered the
original pagination of the essays; thus, any reference must be
made by indicating the essay number in order of appearance
followed by the page number (e.g., I:3). The relatively thorough
subject index at the back of the text is ordered in this fashion.

As the title of the book indicates, the essays are thematically
related by their discussion of the linkages between elite imperial
political power and kinship, generally conceived, in both native

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Chinese regimes and non-Chinese North Asian conquest regimes established in China, most of the latter regimes being based in Northern China. In particular, the essays focus on the impact of affinal/matrilineal ties upon the imperial political process. To borrow a phrase coined by Prasenjit Duara, this volume subjects "the cultural nexus of power" that comprised the China-based imperial political structure to a rigorous, systematic investigation. Holmgren uses anthropologically nuanced analytical categories in order to construct broad, dynamic patterns of political action, and indeed, to construct sub-patterns appropriate to native Chinese regimes and to North Asian conquest regimes, respectively. Holmgren's intelligent inter-disciplinary approach and her specific analysis, supported by access to primary language sources, makes this book a pioneering effort in reconstructing and re-interpreting imperial Chinese political history. What I feel to be the core essays in the volume (II-V, VII) can be divided into two synthetic essays of historical social anthropology (II-III), and three much more research-intensive essays on political history (IV-V, VII). The concluding essay (VII) is by far the best written and most lucid presentation in the text of Holmgren's writings on interpretive political history.

The essays of historical social anthropology (II-III) focus on the issue of widow re-marriage, first in Chinese society (essay II) and then in Mongol society (essay III). In this latter case, the North Asian practice of the levirate is the center of discussion. Discussion of widow re-marriage also leads into related areas such as dowry vs. bride-price, Chinese versions of monogamy vs. North Asian polygamy, joint vs. separate residence for female spouses. The Mongol essay is particularly satisfying, moving from a discussion of general Mongol social practice to innovations developed by Mongol political elites in the context of structured empire building, to a very interesting concluding section dealing with the unintended social and legal outcomes of Mongol dominion in China, for both Han Chinese and resident Mongols. Both essays heavily rely upon translations and standard Western language sources for the basic data, which Holmgren groups into logically satisfying categories, which are then discussed and commented upon. The essay on Mongol social anthropology also includes references to primary language sources (the Yuan shih and Meng-wu-erh shih-chi). The essays are clearly written, lucid and well-reasoned. They also are very sensitive to changing practices over