JIES Reviews

Archaeology

Leonid Sverchkov, *Tokhary, Drevnie Indoevropeytsy v Tsentral'noy Azii* (Tokharians, Ancient Indo-Europeans in Central Asia)Tashkent, SMI-ASIA, 2012. ISBN 978-9943-17-048-3 (paperback). Pp 239.

This book, probably the most extensive attempt yet to tackle the origins of the Tokharians, is divided into three parts. The first, the "Tokharian languages and the Tokharian problem" provides a useful summary of the history of the discovery of the Tokharian languages and the debate concerning their temporal and geographical position within the spread of the Indo-European languages. These range from those who seek to anchor it in the vicinity of the Northwest group, or Greek or see it as a result of an early separation (after Anatolian) isolated on the eastern periphery. The author then briefly examines the range of archaeological solutions to Tokharian origins that range from north-eastern Europe (Corded Ware, Globular Amphora, Fatjanovo) across the steppe and forest steppe (Abashevo) to Siberia (Afanasievo, Okunevo, Sejma-Turbino horizon). The general thrust has been some acceptance for a Siberian solution although arguments that associate the Afanasevo culture of the Yenisei and Altay with those of the Tarim Basin itself are hardly supported by robust archaeological evidence. Sverchkov then provides a summary survey of the archaeology of Xinjiang. It begins with evidence for human settlement (or at least tool kits—stone tools and later pottery) that might be notionally set to range from *c* 9000 BCE (stone tool kits) to the millennium before 2000 BCE (the appearance of some pottery). Analogies for this material can be sought both in Central Asia (Afghanistan) and Mongolia. After this begins the Bronze Age which is associated with abundant evidence for burials. Employing Jianjun Mei's geographical division of Xinjiang's

"archaeological cultures", the author provides a summary of the various regional groups. The overall picture, following the work of Corinne Debaine-Francfort, sees three regional divisions: the northwest region with evidence of Andronovo material which has been associated with the Saka presence in Xinjiang; the area south, west and northwest of the Taklamakan desert with grey wares (Aketala) which, it has been argued, may be connected with Ferghana; and the painted ware groups that occupied the area between Kucha and Hami, the area that yields our evidence of the Tokharian languages. Sverchkov notes that attempts to associate the Tarim Basin with the Afanasievo culture of the steppe region rest almost exclusively on arguments from physical type (Proto-Europoids found at Gumogou/Qäwrighul) which might also be paralleled with the bearers of the Keltiminar culture of Central Asia. This turns his focus from the steppe to Central Asian cultures which also have a strong claim to be the source of some of the "western" influences found in Xinjiang.

The second section of the book investigates Central Asia as a cultural historical region. It briefly summarizes the major Palaeolithic influences, then provides more detail about the Mesolithic cultures of the region before settling down to a much more thorough description of the Neolithic cultures, among which much time is devoted to the Kelteminar culture that occupied a broad area of Central Asia and which many earlier authors saw as critical in explaining the origins of many of the neighboring cultures, among which would be included the Afanasievo culture of the Altay and Minusinsk Basin. The author continues laying out the cultural-historical development of Central Asia up to the early Middle Ages.

The third part is titled 'Tokharians and the Indo-European problem" and the archaeological evidence seen earlier is then recast to provide arguments for a Central Asian homeland for the Indo-Europeans. One of the perennial problems with searching out the origins of any particular Indo-European group is that all too often proponents of a particular theory provide an isolated 'solution' divorced from the fact that it is only part of a larger puzzle and its pieces must make joins with the rest

of the Indo-European world. I have termed this the 'total distribution principle' and it is one of the tests of how serious we should deal with any partial solution to Indo-European expansions. In attempting to meet this principle, one can hardly criticize the author as his final section is essentially a very detailed proposal for a 'new' Indo-European homeland in Central Asia. Geographically situated not far from the earlier proposals of Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, it does provide some legs to their general positioning of the Indo-European homeland but in a novel fashion. Sverchkov's solution also embraces a series of earlier suggestions or models but is truly his own in terms of its implementation.

Sverchkov's solution is fundamentally a rejection of those who would normally dismiss Central Asia as merely a transition zone across which migrating populations passed through. During the transition between the Mesolithic and Neolithic we find a vast Keltiminar culture occupying the entire region from the Urals and Caspian east to the Altay, and north of the Kopetdagh and northern Afghanistan. This region matches at least in areal extent the type of homelands anchored in Europe such as those who have sought the Urheimat in the area of the Linearbandkeramik. To these Sverchkov also includes the southern agricultural regions of Jarmo and later Jeitun which would appear to lie outside the area normally ascribed to other non-Indo-European languages (Semitic, Elamite, Dravidian, Altaic, Uralic). This entire region then functions as a broad Indo-European homeland. He suggests that the westward movement of the Halaf culture accounts for the separation of the Anatolian branch. The Proto-Tocharians begin within the Jeitun region and moved eastwards to arrive in Ferghana by the Bronze Age. The archaeological discussion emphasizes the presence of painted wares in both the Tarim Basin, especially in the region where we find Tocharian B, and Ferghana, and these persistent contacts are seen as indicating the spread of the Tokharian languages. This pattern of Central Asian contacts is seen even in the earliest cemeteries of the region (Xiaohe, Gumagou) which, although lacking ceramics altogether, possessed abundant evidence for bag-shaped baskets which have been compared to the shape

and decorations of Kelteminar vessels. It might be noted that precisely the same pot-to-basket argument has been employed by those who support a connection between the Tarim Basin and the steppelands.

The other Indo-European languages are accounted for by very early (Neolithic) movements from Central Asia into the Pontic-Caspian region. The Ayderbol culture of Kazakhstan, for example, is proposed as underlying the formation of the Dnieper-Donets culture of the Ukraine and as seen as the initial wave (roughly in the sense of Marija Gimbutas) of the Italo-Celtic-Illyrians. The Neolithic and Eneolithic developments of the Volga-Ural region are under the Kelteminar aegis and yield the later Germanic-Balto-Slavic branches. Out of the steppe cultures (Sredny Stog and Khvalynsk) and the neighboring Maykop culture he derives the Yamnaya which in the guise of the Andronovo culture sets off the Aryanization of southern Central Asia. Throughout this archaeological discussion the author relates his theories to a variety of linguistic proposals, e.g., Henning's famous argument tying the names of cultures on the frontiers of Mesopotamia with those of the Tarim Basin.

A major plus of this book is its wide-ranging and relatively up to date bibliography that the author has clearly engaged with. On the other hand, the book also lacks any illustrations or maps so it is exceedingly difficult for any reader to evaluate the many claims to cultural similarity, movements, etc. unless they are already fully conversant with all the literature. For a theory painted on such a large canvas it is impossible to deal it justice but I have always found the following litmus test a useful means of evaluating any homeland theory. The same names for domestic animals are found across the entire Indo-European world and, in the context of Sverchkov's proposal, we need to be able to explain why we should have the same ancestral forms at Jeitun (*c* 6000 BC from where we trace the Tokharians) as in the Dnieper-Donets culture of the Ukraine (from where we would trace the ancestors of the Celts). This would certainly seem to imply that the earliest domestic animals (all but the horse) were domesticated in the Caspian region (a theory that has

occasionally emerged in earlier Russian archaeological literature) and then passed northwards across the steppe region. I think today this theory would be a very hard sell as there are far more proximate sources for domestic animals in the European steppe to be found both in the Balkans and the Caucasus. Moreover, the other cultural connections between the steppe cultures and the area of south Central Asia are simply not very prominent nor persistent. Time depth is also a critical element of any evaluation and the fact that Tokharian inherits some of the Indo-European terminology for vehicles suggests that we cannot seriously imagine expansions prior to 4000 BCE if not much more recent. This puts a temporal restriction on any attempt to relate the cultures of the European steppe/forest-steppe with those of Central Asia.

Returning to Tokharian origins, Sverchkov does provide an interesting alternative to the steppe theory that suggests that the Tokharians can be traced northwards to the Altay and Yenisei (Afanasievo culture). There is certainly a case for contacts between the Tarim Basin and Ferghana and neighboring areas that can be seen in material culture that must be addressed in any attempt to resolve the problem of Tokharian origins.

<div align="right">
J P Mallory
Queen's University Belfast
</div>

Culture

Karen Bek-Pedersen. *The Norns in Old Norse Mythology*. Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press. 2011. ISBN 978-1-906716-18-9. 224 pp.

Studies on Norse and Germanic religion and mythology have experienced a growth spurt in the last three decades, flourishing now as never since WWII, and Karen Bek-Pedersen's book on the Nordic fate goddesses, the norns, keeps pace with this movement. Her expressed goals are modest: "The research presented here is not intended to constitute the final academic word on the *nornir* — rather, the feeling is that it makes a start in terms of treating the *nornir* as the focal point of extensive research. The

intention is to look at the concepts and ideas that lie
behind the extant source material in order to bring about a
better understanding of these figures than has hitherto
been current. Hopefully, the findings presented below can
serve as a base for future research on the *nornir*" (p. 10).
Bek-Pedersen's methods are mainly philological, beginning
with a survey of the uses of the word in older texts, leading
into surveys of other collective supernatural females and
eventually to conceptually centered chapters. She fully
executes the quoted statement of purpose, except perhaps
for the comparative idea in "a better understanding …
than has … been current." Although she cites a great deal
of secondary work, we are never given a formal
Forschungsbericht that would establish the difference
between her total picture and that of other scholars; still, I
am confident that in its comprehensiveness this study *is*
"better" and the best future starting point.

The volume's trajectory is from plain descriptive facts
(Chap. 1 "Sources") through careful philological parsing of
passages (Chap. 2 "What is a Norn?"), on to more and more
interesting chapters of ever broader and more compelling
interpretation (3-5), still rooted responsibly, however, in
specific texts. Readers of *JIES* may welcome the basic
evaluation of sources. As a whole, however, the book has
relatively little of the comparative thrust a *JIES* reader
might look for, and Bek-Pedersen puts little trust in
linguistically or etymologically centered mythological
arguments (compare, for example, p. 77 from Gerd
Weber). The second chapter, the book's longest, is the
one most closely tied to the professional Nordic
philological readership; here the author examines in detail
at least nine skaldic passages (treated first as, presumably,
the most authoritative), roughly seventeen eddic passages,
and a few runic and saga passages. The main relevant
concepts – for example, the norns' association with fate,
death, and birth – are drawn empirically from the
explications and linked to further female supernaturals and
to further concepts, for example, *urðr, skǫp, dísir, valkyrjur,
fylgjur*, and the major goddesses such as the Vanadís Freyja
and the *matres* of the Rhineland. The goal of the chapter is
to characterize norns in contrast to similar female

supernaturals and to map out the shared territories, and the results are tracked in neat summaries (pp. 22, 40, 48, 64-66). Bek-Pedersen's interpretations leave little to disagree with: The sayings on p. 24 should be noted as proverbs. The "dogs of the norns" (p. 25, *Hamðismál* 29) rightly follows Dronke; but *grey* sometimes designates explicitly female dogs, and "bitches" would seem to be appropriate here. In the treatment of *Atlakviða* 16 "létir … / Húna scialdmeyiar / hervi kanna," Dronke should have been followed more closely: Bek-Pedersen's n. 31 (p. 68) glosses *hervi* as a verb "to harrow," but it must be a noun "the harrow," so (with Dronke) "to learn to know the harrow." In *Fáfnismál* 44 (p. 35) the comma after *bregða* should be deleted. In translating and discussing the mythically loaded passage *Haraldskvæði* 1-3 (p. 49-51, nn. 60-61), in which a valkyrie converses with a raven, Bek-Pedersen passes over a deeper link between the light and dark "choosers of the slain," as, for example, in the Irish war-goddesses; and in treating Old English *wælcyrge* (n. 73) she omits *wonn wælceasega* "dark chooser of the slain" for the raven in *Exodus* 164.

Chap. 3 "The Women in the Well" investigates issues raised by the three named norns in *Vǫluspá* 19-20 and in Snorri's derived prose (*Gylfaginning* 15-16), sources that present a picture that varies from the one arrived at in Chap. 2. The main topics are the unique naming of the norns and the meaning of their names; their explicit number; the relationship between fate (the functional arena of the norns) and time (a frequent explication of their names). The discussion of triads comes out satisfactorily without citation of Dumézil or Olrik. I found especially interesting the second and third segments of the chapter, which investigate the spatial origins of norns and similar figures, their homes in "dark and humid places," beginning with the well of Urðr. The translation by Alexander of *Beowulf* 1493a is inadequate and the integration of the Old English Christian epic into the argument (pp. 96-97, 103), a bit strained. (The *Beowulf* references p. 143 are not up-to-date.) But the investigation of real female residences ("dyngja") moves interestingly into the mythic resonances of human life.

Chap. 4 "Fate and Threads" studies skeptically the connection, persistent in scholarship but not so strong in the sources, between spinning or weaving as women's work and the idea of destiny; the textual evidence – *Vǫlundarkviða* 1; *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, 1-4; *Darraðarljóð* 1-11 (plus accompanying prose); the *First Merseberg Charm*; and *Guðrúnarkviða II*, 14-16 – comes in for extensive interrogation. Bek-Pedersen appears to be authoritative in matters of real-life cloth making, and I admire her assault on the Helgi passage; but I am left with incomplete understanding and a hangover from Wagner's famous exploitation of it. Bek-Pedersen's synthesis of conceptual and philological discussion is at its strongest in Chap. 5 "Fate, Honour and Speech," the book's final substantial chapter. Terminological connections to "law" are pervasive, and much of the vocabulary of fate is intricately interwoven with that of "honor." The wide-ranging discussion leads back to the spoken word, but more could have been made at this point of the best etymologies of *norn* in connection with speech (pp. 155, 191). In the epilogue "Conclusions," the author rises to the challenge of a synthesizing summary encompassing the major findings of the whole study (pp. 199-203). The volume closes with a generous and up-to-date bibliography.

A few quotidian matters make the use of the book less easy than it might be (brevity of the index; placement of notes at the end of chapters; typos and other minor textual problems), but this is a book any Old Norse scholar will want to consult for the topics and texts it covers. Its philological approach is reliable and consistent; as *mythology* it is most interesting when most adventurous. Bek-Pedersen comments at one point that her next "idea … is in some ways speculative … [in a] slightly more conjectural mode" (pp. 105-06); this is just where the book's interest begins to take off. Under the influence of Gerd Weber's anti-nativist book ('*Wyrd.' Studien zum Schicksalsbegriff der altenglischen und altnordischen Literatur*, 1969), the author is sometimes, in my opinion, overly cautious. From this point of view, Bek-Pedersen is nicely complemented by two other recent studies in related areas. Anthony Winterbourne's *When the Norns Have Spoken: Time and Fate in*

Germanic Paganism (2004) is a boldly philosophical study of Norse space, time, fate, and cosmology unhindered by too much philology or too much skepticism; Bek-Pedersen cites several of Winterbourne's ideas. And Matthias Egeler's *Walküren, Bodbs, Sirenen. Gedanken zur religionsge-schichtlichen Anbindung Nordwesteuropas an den mediterranen Raum* (2011) provides in spades comparative dimensions for the valkyries; Bek-Pedersen cites an article of Egeler's anticipatory to his big book.

Joseph Harris
Harvard University
harris@fas.harvard.edu

Linguistics

Jonathan Roper (ed.), *Alliteration in Culture*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. XIII + 253 pages, 6 illustrations, 9 tables. ISBN 978-0-230-23264-8.

Jonathan Roper's research group sets out to explore alliteration in a cross-linguistic and inter-cultural perspective as one of the most widely shared features of human language. The reader meets an impressive assembly of scholars from different cultures, language groups and academic traditions focusing on alliteration more broadly and establishing a new interdisciplinary research field. Hence, the aim of the book is no less than opening up the field of alliterative studies for further inquiries and the diversification of special fields, compare Ragnar Ingi Aðalsteinsson's diachronic account of alliteration in Icelandic (Aðalsteinsson 2010). Initially, Roper mentions the neglect of scholarly attention as documented symptomatically by Hoops' *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* (first ed.) where we find little more than ten pages dedicated to 'Stabreim' (Hoops 1911-1919 IV: 231-240). Although the revised version of this comprehensive dictionary has been extended to 37 volumes (including two large register volumes), Roper notes that the entry on alliteration receives less coverage than in the first edition (Beck et al. 1973-2008 XXIX: 435-440). To be honest, however, it should be added that

alliteration and *Stabreim* turn up frequently in the *Reallexikon* in the discussion of poems, epics and runic inscriptions, e.g. the Gallehus gold horn.

Roper poses the following basic research questions to be addressed by his fourteen contributors: (1) What effects does alliteration have? (2) What is its history? (3) What are the terms we might best use to describe it?[1] (4) And when might people wish to avoid it? The marked research focus on alliteration is clearly a new one, not least because alliteration has traditionally been associated with metrical and literary studies, in particular *ars poetica*. Epigraphy can be added as a research field that has a genuine interest in alliteration as well, e.g. Owen 1928. The present volume, however, makes it clear that this feature occurs in a variety of genres, micro-genres and oral performances – from poetry, proverbs, idioms, limericks, riddles, tongue-twisters, charms, spells and curses, nursery rhymes via legal texts, inaugural speeches to modern pop lyrics, advertisements, commercial slogans, tabloid headlines, and even place names. Following Turville-Petre's *Alliterative Revival* of 1977, it seems daring indeed to account for a deeply rooted cognitive process of language production and perception that covers different (if not all) historical stages of language.

Although the primary focus of the book rests on Germanic data (i.e. American and British English, Dutch, Old Frisian, Modern Swedish, Old Norse and Icelandic), non-European languages such as Mongolian, Hungarian (Uralic language), Finnic and even Somali are included in the discussion. Roper (2) emphasizes that the classical focus on metre and metrics is inapt to capture alliteration in its various forms and manifestations. An idea that turns up repeatedly is the notion of genre-specific strategies in the use of alliteration, compare for instance legal texts and maxims as opposed to poetry and epic works (see below, cf. also Gurevič 1986, Schulte 2011). Roper, in his

---

[1]Among the technical terms that feature in this book are cluster alliteration, cross-alliteration, epenthetic alliteration, perfect vs. imperfect alliteration, morphological alliteration, ornamental alliteration, over-alliteration, secondary alliteration, and strong vs. weak alliteration. See the index, pp. 247-253.

introduction of key topics, claims that alliteration takes on different functions in different genres, and the evidence adduced by the contributors partly supports this claim (see below).

An insight that immediately emerges from this volume is that cross-linguistic universals are rare, if there are any, rather that in different cultures and speech communities we are faced with language-specific sets of parameters governing the rules of alliteration and related phenomena. Moreover, even rhetorical and stylistic devices seem to vary according to cultural habits, conventions and taste: compare the Indian *kāvya* literature that abounds in what Indian grammarians label *anuprāsa* and *yamaka*, viz. the repetition of equal or similar letters, sequences and words in one and the same stanza (for detail, see Lienhard 1984:105-106).

Rather than treating the single contributions in Roper's volume one by one, the present reviewer highlights central issues that emanate from this recent study.

Tongue-twisters and inaugural speeches

What inaugural speeches and tongue-twisters have in common is their exclusive reliance on the spoken word. Compare the crucial notion of *brageyra* 'poetic ear' in Icelandic metrics which Ragnar Ingi Aðalsteinsson (2010:59-60) defines in the following way:

> Brageyrað er tilfinning fyrir stuðlun og hrynjandi og það verður til við lestur kvæða og vísna og við önnur kynni af hefðbundnum kveðskap. ["'Brageyrað' is the feeling for alliteration and rhythm, and it is based on reading aloud the poems and stanzas as well as on other knowledge of traditional poetry."]

To put it differently, the oral performance is crucial for its impact on the audience, hence 'eye alliteration' based on the written medium is not the issue.[2] Cowdell, in his contribution "Purposely to Please the Palates of Pretty

---

[2]Roper (8), in his introduction to key topics, clarifies that "the term 'eye alliteration' [is used; M.S.] to refer to a phenomenon denoting a visual and non-audible recurrence". Cf. note 8 below.

Prattling Playfellows", illustrates this point with recourse to tongue-twisters (62-73). As he notes, this is a neglected field with few published text corpuses and analytical studies – a notable exception, however, is Jorgensen 1981, who conducted a comprehensive analysis of difficulties in performing tongue-twisters. Cowdell highlights the micro-genre of tongue-twisters in language learning, elocution training and dramatic performance in theatrical occupational custom. He also mentions other functions like the 'idea of the shibboleth' (63), which according to the account in Judges 12.5-6 was used by the inhabitants of Gilead to single out their defeated Ephraimite opponents, who had no initial /ʃ/ in their language and hence substituted it with /s/.

Cowdell's research provides evidence of drama teachers at all levels using tongue-twisters such as "**Sw**an **sw**am over the sea, **sw**im **sw**an **sw**im! **Sw**an **sw**am back again, well **sw**um **sw**an!" From the actors' and performers' point of view, Cowdell resumes,

> the tongue-twister offers an irresistible opportunity to demonstrate performance skill whilst at the same time providing a tool to train those very skills. (62)

An element of humour and contest — if not laughter — amongst the performers and the audience adds to the appeal of tongue-twisters. As regards articulation, vocalic tongue-twisters with lax and tense vowel pairs, for instance, pose severe problems to the speech apparatus in executing two similar (albeit different) tongue-heights in a brief period of time. Cowdell (67), again referring to Jorgensen 1981, describes folk metaphors for the "breakdown of the speech apparatus" from the perspective of the genre as a whole: "**t**ongue *tanglers, trippers,* or *twisters,* as well as *cramp words*", or even "jaw busters". He emphasizes that this is essentially an oral or performed genre which — like inaugural speeches — does not lend itself to 'eye alliteration' (64). This observation underpins the performative qualities of tongue-twisters, and he adds Dundes 1964, who identifies a 'common structural feature' supporting verbatim recall or oral performance in general, viz. a two-part structure with the second segment inverting

or modifying the first one. Cowdell (65) cites the following example from Halliwell 1846 which complies with Dundes' criterion. Note the inversion of word order in B and D in relation to A and C:

A **P**eter **P**iper **p**icked ‖ a **p**eck of **p**ickled **p**epper,
B A **p**eck of **p**ickled **p**epper ‖ **P**eter **P**iper **p**icked;
C If **P**eter **P**iper **p**icked ‖ a **p**eck of **p**ickled **p**epper,
D Where's the **p**eck of **p**ickled **p**epper ‖ **P**eter **P**iper **p**icked?

Cowdell (67) refers to Mook 1959 in noting an array of different types of tongue-twisters, indicative of different audience registers. It seems to me that the stress on different audience registers lends itself to new sociolinguistic studies focusing on the issue of style along with the listeners' expectation and attitude. To sum up, a tongue-twister is a professional tool for actors that trigger showstoppers and, as Cowdell (72) would have it, "offers the opportunity to barnstorm".

A genre that fulfills related performative functions is the inaugural address — a sub-genre of political speeches. Halmari thus sets out to investigate "Alliteration in Inaugural Addresses: From George Washington to Barack Obama" (45-61). She explicitly states that "phonology (not orthography) determines what alliterates. No 'eye-alliteration' is included", for example "let every **n**ation **kn**ow" (Kennedy, 1961), or "**j**ustice and **g**enerosity" (Roosevelt, 1905) are included on a phonological basis, whereas "in **h**elp **h**onorably given" (Eisenhower, 1957) is not (49). Further criteria involve the word-initial position of alliterative patterns (irrespective of stress) and the proximity criterion, which says that only three words can intervene, e.g. "**p**eril of our government by the **p**eople" is excluded due to the distance between the two words with initial *p*-. Halmari rejects the alliteration of grammatical words, particularly prepositions, conjunctions and articles, as opposed to content words such as 'nation' and 'justice' (50). Note that word class sensitivity is a salient feature of alliteration that recurs in a variety of genres and speech communities, among other things in the discussion of

proverbs and poetry.[3] In skaldic verse, for instance, Gade (1986) summarizes the alleged word class hierarchy (based on Rieger 1876) as follows (Since I miss a clear exemplification in Árnason's and Aðalsteinsson's contributions in this volume, I quote Gade 1986:75-76):

1.   Nomina (nouns, adjectives and the verbal participes I and II) are more heavily stressed than other word classes.
2.   The finite verb is less strongly stressed than a nomen. The verb of the main clause has less stress than that of a subordinate clause.
3.   Adverbs belonging to adjectives and other adverbs are more strongly stressed than the same words if they act as qualifiers. They have no stress if they function as intensifiers.
4.   Pronouns and pronominal adjectives are often enclitics but nevertheless receive strong rhetorical stress.
5.   Prepositions and conjunctions lack stress.

Halmari's succinct corpus study covers all the inaugural addresses of US presidents to date (56 speeches altogether), comprising over 3,000 instances of alliteration per 130,000 words altogether; for detail see Halmari's appendix: "Alliterations for the entire corpus" (60-61). One of Halmari's results is that a fine political orator and skilful performer uses alliteration with modesty (e.g. 46, 58). In this light, Thomas Jefferson, Franklin Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama belong to the group of 'average alliterators', while Bill Clinton and Bush Jr. are 'heavy alliterators'. The author hypothesizes that "populist presidents seem to resort to alliteration more readily than non-populist presidents, who tend to be more moderate alliterators" (46). To some extent, this hypothesis is borne out by Halmari's analysis. Incidentally, George W. Bush's alliteration count in his first inaugural speech was higher than any other American president's. Without delving into Halmari's statistical details, it seems clear that certain political speeches are charged with a high percentage of alliteration in order to be persuasive and emotive (cf.

---

[3]Compare the book's index under "alliteration and word class."

Halmari 2005). A case in point is Franklin D. Roosevelt's third inaugural address (with an alliteration score of no less than 28.0 per 1000 words). This speech was delivered in 1941 when Roosevelt was preparing the nation for entry into World War II. By way of conclusion, inaugural addresses, not unlike tongue-twisters, represent a performance-based micro-genre that is narrowly defined by conventions and audience expectations. More importantly, Halmari (58) confirms that "alliteration has been and continues to be a persuasive, audience-engaging rhetorical device in political communication." As things stand, the emphatic and persuasive force of alliteration seems to constitute one of its performative qualities.

Proverbs and idioms

Almost three and a half centuries ago John Ray compiled a list of alliterative proverbs in English which he labeled "Proverbial Similes, in which the quality and the subject begin with the same letter" (Ray 1670:201-203). In this volume, Carson Williams, who has undertaken extensive work on proverbs and wellerisms, deplores alliteration in modern anglophone idioms and proverbs: "Alliteration in English-Language Versions of Current Widespread European Idioms and Proverbs" (34-44). Based on Paczolay 1997 and EUROPHRAS, the database of the European Society of Phraseology, [4] Carson Williams conducts a quantitative search of the most widespread European proverbs and idioms, found in the media and in advertisements. One of the general differences between proverbs and idioms which the author notes is "that many of the proverbs rhyme whereas only *one* of the idioms, 'to be in seventh heaven', rhymes" (36). The structure of widespread idioms is particularly revealing because most of them end in a noun, e.g. "to wear the trousers", and all the idioms that alliterate engage a final alliterating noun, e.g. "to add **f**uel to the **f**lames", where the final noun participates in the alliterative pattern. Another valid observation is that the final noun (which, as said, bears

---

[4]EUROPHRAS, European Society of Phraseology, Europäische Gesellschaft für Phraseologie, Société européenne de phraséologie at http://www.europhras.unizh.ch.

stress and alliterates) marks the end of a sentence or period and is therefore followed by a pause, as in "She's thrown the **b**aby out with the **b**athwater" (37), hence the demarcative function of alliteration. It is worthy of notice that such rules play a prominent role in traditions outside Germanic as well. In Somali alliterative verse, as mentioned by Orwin in this volume (219-230), the placement of alliteration seems to be restricted by word-boundary rules.

It is noteworthy that two of Carson William's idioms display alliteration in all *three* languages, viz. English, German and French (40):

> to buy a **p**ig in a **p**oke
> die **K**atze im Sack **k**aufen
> a**ch**eter le **ch**at en sac
>
> and
>
> to **s**wim against the **s**tream
> gegen den **S**trom **sch**wimmen
> nager **c**ontre le **c**ourant.

The author notes that semantic constraints may override alliteration, hence the absence of alliteration in idioms such as "to swim against the tide" as opposed to "**s**wim against the **s**tream" (40). The author ponders whether "the choice of variants is determined by the significance of the sea in some places, which may take precedence over alliteration." Similar considerations apply to proverbs. The author further identifies the usual structure VERB + DEFINITE ARTICLE + NOUN in all of the 100 widespread idioms, e.g. "to break the ice", but other patterns are also in evidence, e.g. NOUN + NOUN, as in "to buy a **p**ig in a **p**oke", or also involving the verb, i.e. VERB + NOUN + NOUN, for example "to **m**ake a **m**ountain out of a **m**olehill" (39), which also exists as a proverb: "Don't **m**ake a **m**ountain out of a **m**olehill". As the author notes, Paczolay (1997: 409-412) has located this expression, mainly as an idiom, in 39 different languages. On the whole, 13 per cent of the idioms alliterate, and no other stylistic feature such as rhyme or rhythm features as prominently as alliteration. As Carson Williams (41) puts it,

> Alliteration is therefore the most consistent stylistic
> feature of these idioms, although it is much less
> common here than in riddles and in tongue-twisters.
> (41)

If we turn from idioms to proverbs, roughly 30 per cent (32 out of 106) display alliteration in their English version, e.g. "All that **g**litters is not **g**old". The corresponding ratio for French and German is slightly higher, viz. 34 out of 106 and 43 out of 106, respectively. The fact that alliteration features twice as often in widespread anglophone proverbs as in the current idioms is explained first of all by the different length of word strings: "Proverbs usually contain more words than idioms which, no doubt, affords more opportunities for alliteration" (42). From the present reviewer's point of view, different degrees of lexicalization and idiomatization in proverbs and idioms add to this complex picture (cf. Wray 2009). As Carson Williams further notes, in many proverbs distant words that are backed up by stress alliterate, e.g. "One '**s**wallow doesn't make a '**s**ummer"; but compare Halmari's proximity criterion in her analysis of inaugural addresses above. Finally, Carson Williams addresses what she labels the 'tongue-twister effect' in several fixed expressions revealing an oral basis (42). To conclude, alliteration is the most significant stylistic feature in the idioms and proverbs under investigation, but it is clearly subordinate to their semantic content. As already mentioned, this insightful analysis would probably have profited from research on formulaic language, not least when a lexicalization scale of proverbs and idioms is invoked.

Expressive alliteration in place names
        Harte enters an unexplored research-field, the use of alliteration in English field-names coined by nineteenth-century farmworkers and peasants: "Love, Silver and the Devil: Alliteration in English Place-Names" (21-33). Rather than focusing on rare coinages and hapax words, Harte investigates a group of recurrent, rather widespread names to rule out coincidence and to prove a general principle, viz. the use of toponyms as stylistic markers. Many

derogatory names for infertile dry or wet land in the modern period belong here, e.g. ***Shivery Sham** at Marston*, ***Dry Drayton*** in Cambridgeshire (***Driedraiton***, 1218), or ***Morton in (the) Marsh***.[5] As Harte convincingly argues,

> From the 1200s onwards, alliteration has been used for scurrilous or derogatory effect – first in a few distinctive settlement names, and then in a tradition of field-names that begin with ***Hungry Hill*** and then widens out in the modern period to encompass a much wider range of reference. (26)

These names of fields, streets, buildings and even supernatural beings which are traceable from the thirteenth century on, functioned as an emotional outlet for the frustration of farmworkers and poor laborours, compare ***Raton Rowe***, 'row of rat-infested houses' (*Vicus de Ratunrowe* appears in 1288 at Norwich). Later this name was re-interpreted as *Rotten Row*, keeping the alliteration as well as the derogatory sense (28). Several other names are obviously charged with equal sarcasm or irony, e.g. ***Howlet Hall*** at Brent Pelham, which is the name for a derelict building. Harte argues his case convincingly, claiming that "the tradition of naming was performative rather than referential." The paper indicates functional overlaps between the naming practices addressed in this study and in poetry, compare for instance the sub-genre of the eddic *senna*, lit. 'quarrel' with its insults and curses (cf. Thorvaldsen 2010). Moreover, in a cross-cultural perspective, it would probably be a rewarding task to explore different traditions of alliterative place-names, e.g. Modern Norwegian ***Høgehaugen***, ***Løvlia***, ***Langeli*** and ***Bilbøen***.[6]

---

[5]Harte, in passing, notices one context where alliteration does not assume a derogatory function, viz. in pub names. The majority of the names which belong here are metonymic or metaphorical, e.g. ***Blue Boar***, ***Big Ben***, ***Blunch of Bluebells***, and ***Battle of Britain*** (31, note 11 with reference).

[6]See e.g. Rygh's comprehensive work in 18 volumes, *Norske Gaardnavne*, under ***Seljeset*** (***Selleseter*** from Old Norse ****Seljusetr*** 'summer mountain farm made of sallow wood (Salix caprea)' which is documented in 1603) in Møre og Romsdal, viz. ***Langeli***, ***Langøyli***, ***Lundli***, and ***Løbergsli***. Here it may be asked whether the second element *li* 'hillside' attracts an alliterating first element such as *Lange-*, *Langøy-*, *Lund-*, *Løberg-*. The frequency of this alliterative pattern suggests that it can hardly be coincidental.

It may be hoped that Harte will inspire name researchers from different traditions to cope with this sort of intricate material under a similar stylistic-pragmatic research focus.

Eschewing alliteration – the inverse matrix?

In a study originally published in 1940, the German scholar Schröder mentioned that, out of 30.000 single names included in his collection, less than 300, i.e. 1 per cent, bear names with internal alliteration, and that there were no instances of internal rhyme in his material (see Schröder 1944: 17, 22). Under this focus, Hagåsen investigates the Swedish system of personal names in light of its Old Germanic background: "Restrictions on Alliteration and Rhyme in Contemporary Swedish Personal Names with an Old Germanic Retrospect" (93-108). The author identifies two factors that prevent alliteration in dithematic names: (1) the distaste for conspicuous and ridiculous names (in particular when high-status names are involved), and (2) poetic and metrical demands in Old Germanic heroic poetry. Hagåsen refers to the German name researcher Schramm, who believed that alliteration in dithematic names was eschewed due to the poetic demands of alliterative poetry, particularly the stress pattern (Schramm 1957: 16-17, 33). As Hagåsen concludes,

> In the formation of dithematic names in Old Germanic, on the one hand, and in Swedish from later centuries down to the present, on the other, the rejection of rhyming elements should certainly be ascribed to people's anxiety about forming names that might make a conspicuous and even ridiculous impression. (106)

Hagåsen finds that the reluctant use of alliteration and rhyme (including phoneme repetition in general) in Modern Swedish dithematic surnames and male and female double first names has to be interpreted in different ways than in Old Germanic. While this is certainly correct, the author could perhaps have made his point more clearly. First of all, there are Early Runic names (first name and surname, so to say) that favour alliteration, cf. particularly **hlewagastiz holtijaz** 'Hlewagastiz stemming from Holta"

(Gallehus gold horn, ca. 400 AD), **hrozaz hrozez** 'Hrōzaz, the descendant of Hrōzaz' (By stone, 500-550 AD) and **hAþu-wulafR hAeru-wulafiR** (Istaby stone, Blekinge, ca. 600-650 AD), i.e. three personal names with a subsequent alliterative patronym. A crucial function of alliteration that was exploited extensively in Old Germanic was to mark the lineage and the unity of warrior clans and heroes such as the *wulf*-dynasty from early seventh-century Blekinge (see Sundqvist and Hultgård 2004). This system of lycophoric names relies on a combination of alliterative first elements of warlike character coupled with the second element 'wulf': *haþu-* 'battle' in **hAþu-wulafR** (Istaby stone), **hAþu-wolAfR** (Stentoften stone), **hAþu-wolAfA** (Gummarp), *hari-* 'host, army' in **hAri-wulAfR** (Istaby stone), **hAri-wolAfR** (Stentoften stone), and *heru-* 'sword' in **hAeru-wulafiR** (Istaby stone). Comparative evidence suggests that these dithematic names are firmly rooted in Indo-European (e.g. Schmitt 1995). These theriomorphic dithematic names in the Blekinge inscriptions, for instance, reflect a neatly contrived system of name-giving with the personal names consolidating power, status and identity (cf. Schulte forthcoming). It goes without saying that internal alliteration would render this type of name unsuitable for Old Germanic verse, as over-alliteration would interfere with the alliteration matrix. These Old Germanic dithematic names thus do not lend themselves to a direct structural comparison with Modern Swedish *Stenkvist, Stenhammar,* or *Pia-Maria* and *Lise-Lott* (97). On these grounds, I think it would be wise to draw a sharp line in a diachronic perspective between the Old Germanic naming customs on the one hand and the Modern Swedish ones on the other – both in terms of naming traditions and metrical-phonological constraints.[7] Finally note that what the author (106) labels socio-onomastical motives, e.g. undesirable derogatory judgements or ironic effects, is echoed by Harte's discussion of English field-names in this book.

[7]This moot point also applies to related studies on restricted alliteration, e.g. Hagåsen 2009.

Law and poetry

Bremmer, in his "Dealing Dooms: Alliteration in the Old Frisian Laws" (74-92) scrutinizes the scholarship on laws from Grimm onwards, acknowledging the role of Latin rhetorical training and the influence of canonical authors such as Agustine and Cicero. Bremmer takes a critical stance to the notion of versified law, and both he and the reviewer, from different points of departure, arrive at similar conclusions (cf. Schulte 2011). As both authors emphasize, there is a stylistic dimension to alliteration, whereas it is no direct index of orality and old age. Nor is the presence of alliteration to be directly interpreted as a mnemotechnical device that aided verbatim recall before the advent of literacy. Rather, the use of alliteration and alliterative formulae, in particular twin formulae, is a stylistic device pertaining to the genre as such. To argue his case, Bremmer provides three close readings of Frisian law passages in the vernacular, including an intriguing case of two parallel (however independent) translations from Latin to Frisian, viz. the Second Emsingo Manuscript (E2) and the Third Emsingo Manuscript (E3). Only one of these, namely E2, makes use of alliterative word pairs (79-84). In the version of E2 the simple Latin *absconsum* has been rendered as "thet thi bona therinne bi**h**ut and bi**h**eleth se" ("that the killer is protected and concealed therein"). Bremmer rightly points out that Old Frisian *bi**h**ut and bi**h**eleth*, due to their unstressed prefixes, do not alliterate on the initial /b/, but on the /h/ of the stressed verb root (for phonological discussion, see Schulte 2007). As Bremmer argues, "the E2 translator felt an urge to render the simple Latin 'absconsum' with an alliterative word pair to make it sound in line with the customary legal parlance" (83). Roper (16), in the introduction, makes a good point in stating that a twin formula such as *from **H**amlet to **H**arry Potter* "does not refer to those works in particular, but to the full gamut of narratives." At the same time alliteration is emphatic and hence underscores meaning. There are genre-specific features in the use of alliterative word-pairs, and Gurevič (1986) — a work that is unfortunately absent in this book — shows functional differences between legal texts and poetry. But Bremmer's

article is certainly a most useful and succinct contribution to the on-going discussion.

Conclusion

Although several other issues linked to alliterative poetry and non-Indo-European data deserve a detailed discussion, the present reviewer draws the line here. In the foregoing, the focus rested on hitherto neglected sub-genres such as the tongue-twisters, proverbs and derogatory place names. Roper's following statement is clearly to the point:

> It becomes hard to believe in such a thing as a comprehensive and culture-free set of rules governing alliteration that could apply universally to all languages in all periods. (12)

While alliterative practices are obviously language-specific and liable to change, it seems possible to summarize the basic features of alliteration cross-culturally: (1) It highlights the lexically significant units in correlation with stress. (2) It can take on an emphatic or expressive function revealing personal engagement or involvement both on the part of the reader/performer or listener. (3) Conversely, it can assume an ironical or derogatory function (*will-o'-the-wisp*). (4) It seems highly context-sensitive and depends on marked registers and styles. (5) Phonologically, it bonds the significant elements or names in verse or other varieties of speech (compare the Old Germanic naming-traditions). (6) Semantically, alliterative syntagms often engage metonymical or metaphorical processes (cf. idioms and proverbs). (7) Alliteration structures the speech continuum in correlation with stress and pauses.[8]

Having said all this, there can be no doubt that Roper's book marks the starting point of a new research effort exploring alliteration in its various manifestations in different speech communities and cultures. Alliteration, as

---

[8]Note that the reviewer deliberately excluded the moot point of 'eye-alliteration' which is said to be complementary to 'oral alliteration'. See particularly Kaneko's contribution on "Alliteration in Sign Language Poetry", pp. 231-245 in this volume.

part of language and culture, can be viewed as an integral part of speech, involving cultural, cognitive, and interactional processes, such as the social factors which govern language use, knowledge of the speech community and the world at large. Hence cognitive and usage-based models of language would further deepen our understanding of the general theoretical basis of alliteration.

References

Aðalsteinsson, Ragnar Ingi
    2010   *Tólf alda tryggð. Athugun á þróun stuðlasetningar frá elsta þekktum norrænum kveðskap fram til nútímans.* Doctoral diss., University of Iceland.

Beck, Heinrich & al.
    1973-2008 *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, 37 vols. 2nd ed. Berlin and New York: De Gruyter.

Dundes, Alan
    1964   A Choctaw tongue-twister and two examples of Creek word play. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 30.2: 194-196.

Gade, Kari Ellen
    1986   *Skaldic Composition in the Dróttkvætt Meter.* Doctoral diss., University of Minnesota.

Gurevič, Elena A.
    1986   The formulaic pair in Eddic poetry. An experimental analysis. In: Lindow, J., Lönnroth, L. and Weber, G.W. (eds) *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature. New Approaches to Textual Analysis and Literary Criticism.* Odense: Odense University Press, 32-55.

Hagåsen, Lennart
    2009   Restrictions on alliteration and rhyme in the Swedish system of personal names in the light of Old Germanic parallels. In: Ahrens, W., Embleton, S. and Lappiere, A. (eds) *Names in Multi-Lingual, Multi-Cultural and Multi-Ethnic Contact. Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Onomastic Sciences, August 17-22, 2008.* Toronto: York University, 460-464.

Halliwell, James Orchard
    1846   *The Nursery Rhymes of England.* 4th ed. London: Smith. Available in electronic form at http://www.presscom.co.uk/halli_1.html [accessed 1.12.2011].

Halmari, Helena
   2005   In search of "successful" political persuasion: a comparison of the styles of Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan. In: Halmari, H. and Virtanen, T. (eds) *Persuasion across Genres: a Linguistic Approach.* Amsterdam: Benjamins, 105-134.

Hoops, Johannes & al.
   1911-19 *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde,* 4 vols. Straßburg: Trübner.

Jorgensen, Marilyn
   1981   The tickled, tangled, tripped and twisted tongue: a linguistic study of factors relating to difficulty in the performance of tongue-twisters. *New York Folklore* 7.3: 67-81.

Lienhard, Siegfried
   1984   *A History of Classical Poetry Sanskrit − Pali − Prakrit.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Mook, Maurice A.
   1959   Tongue tanglers from Central Pennsylvania. *Journal of American Folklore* 72: 291-296.

Owen, Francis
   1928   Alliteration in the runic inscriptions. *Modern Philology* 25: 397-408.

Paczolay, Gyula
   1997   *European Proverbs in 55 Languages with Equivalents in Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Chines and Japanese.* Veszprém: Veszprémi Nyomda.

Ray, John
   1670   *A Collection of English Proverbs.* Cambridge: Morden.

Rieger, Max
   1876   Die alt- und angelsächsische Verskunst. *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 7: 1-64.

Rygh, Oluf
   1833-1899 *Norske Gaardnavne.* 18 vols. Kristiania. Available in electronic form at http://www.dokpro.uio.no/rygh_ng/rygh_felt.html [accessed 5.12.2011].

Schmitt, Rüdiger
   1995   Entwicklung der Namen in älteren indogermanischen Sprachen. In: Eichler, E. & al. (eds) *Namenforschung. Ein internationals Handbuch zur Onomastik.* Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 616-636.

Schramm, Gottfried
    1957   *Namenschatz und Dichtersprache. Studien zu den zweigliedrigen Personennamen der Germanen.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Schröder, Edward
    1944   Grundgesetze für die Komposition der altdeutschen Personennamen. In: Wolff, L. (ed.) *Deutsche Namenkunde. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kunde deutscher Personen- und Ortsnamen von Edward Schröder.* 2nd ed. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 12-27.

Schulte, Michael
    2007   Präverbierung in den prosodischen Systemen des Altgermanischen. *NOWELE* 50/51: 5‒40.
    2011   Early Scandinavian legal texts ‒ Evidence of preliterary metrical composition? In: Schulte, M. and Nedoma, R. (eds) *Language and Literacy in early Scandinavia and Beyond.* Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 1-30.
    Forthcoming Die Blekinger Inschriften als Statussymbole und Embleme der Macht. Ein kulturhistorischer Syntheseversuch. In: Grimm, O. and Pesch, A. (eds) *Schriften des Archäologischen Landesmuseums.* Neumünster: Wachholtz.

Sundqvist, Olof and Hultgård, Anders
    2004   The lycophoric names of the 6th and 7th century. Blekinge rune stones and the problem of their ideological background. In: Van Nahl, A., Elmevik, L. and Brink, S. (eds) *Namenwelten.* Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 583-602.

Thorvaldsen, Bernt Øyvind
    2010   The poetic curse and its relatives. In: Rankovič, S., Melve, L. and Mundal, E. (eds) *Along the Oral-Written Continuum. Types of Texts, relations and their Implications.* Turnhout: Brepols, 253-267.

Turville-Petre, Thorlac
    1977   *The Alliterative Revival.* Cambridge: Brewer.

Wray, Allison
    2009   Identifying formulaic language. Persistent challenges and new opportunities. In: Corrigan, R. & al. (eds) *Formulaic Language, 1. Distribution and Historical Change.* Amsterdam: Benjamins, 27-51.

<div align="right">
Michael Schulte
Volda University College
</div>