

## The Aḥiqar sayings: Some marginal comments

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[The new edition of Aḥiqar's Sayings by J. Lindenberger offers the author of this article the opportunity to contribute some comments on them, pointing to unnoticed parallels in ancient Near Eastern literature and concentrating on poetic aspects such as versification, parallelism and other rhetoric devices.]

James Lindenberger's new edition of the Proverbs of Aḥiqar<sup>1</sup> is very welcome. Apart from its intrinsic merit as a critical edition of these important sayings, based on actual study of the original papyrus (from Elephantine) his study is of significance at other levels. He has confirmed the current consensus that the original language of both the story and the proverbs is Aramaic, not Akkadian<sup>2</sup>. This in turn means that Aḥiqar can now be considered as Aramaic literature, a welcome addition to the small but growing corpus of extant Aramaic poetry<sup>3</sup>. Lindenberger has commented on poetic aspects of these sayings<sup>4</sup> arguing that while some are definitely verse, others are prosaic, with various grades between these extremes<sup>5</sup>. Finally, he has provided evidence for an origin in northern Syria, which again fills a gap in the known wisdom traditions of that area, quite apart from any comparisons that can be drawn with Ugaritic and Hebrew literature.

1. James M. Lindenberger, *The Aramaic Proverbs of Aḥiqar*. Baltimore 1983. I have also consulted his 1974 doctoral thesis with the same title (Ann Arbor, Michigan 1982; No. 77-16. 567). These works will be referred to as Lindenberger, *Proverbs* and *Proverbs (thesis)*. Appendix A of the original thesis has now appeared as "The Gods of Aḥiqar", *UF* 14(1982)105-118. Both his thesis and his paper in *UF* 14 were invaluable for my own preparation of a course in wisdom texts given in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Since then I have been able to consult his book.

2. In addition, Lindenberger has shown that E. Y. Kutscher and J.C. Greenfield were correct in asserting that the Sayings and the frame narrative are in different dialects of Aramaic. Details are provided in *Proverbs*, 379-304 (= Appendix A; *thesis*, 488-518 = Appendix B).

3. For a brief bibliography see my *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques*. Sheffield 1984, p. 5, n. 2. In addition, R.C. Steiner - C.F. Nims, "A Polemical Poem from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script", *JNES* 43(1984)89-114 and S.P. Vleeming - J.W. Wesselius, "An Aramaic Hymn from the Fourth Century B.C.", *BO* 39(1982)502-509. Also, J.C. VanderKam, "The Poetry of IQApGen. XX, 2-8a", *RevQum* 10(1979-81)57-66; he shows that these lines comprise a nine-stanza poem which exhibits repetition, parallelism, chiasmus, rhyme, assonance, alliteration, paronomasia, envelope figure (*inclusio*) and a degree of metrical patterning. Cf., too, Greenfield, *JANES* 11(1979)49-51.

4. Lindenberger, *Proverbs*, 23-24 (*thesis*, 18-20) and *passim*.

5. Lindenberger, *Proverbs*, 23 (*thesis*, 19). For Hebrew see J. L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*. New Haven/London 1981, pp. 59-95.

My comments here do not constitute a critical review; rather they are intended as an acceptance of Lindenberger's invitation for renewed study of these interesting sayings. I will point to some unnoticed parallels in ancient Near Eastern literature and concentrate on poetic aspects, in line with Lindenberger's own remarks. First I will comment on individual sayings, in sequence; then I will make some observations on versification and lastly, draw some tentative conclusions. Some lesser comments will be reserved to footnotes<sup>6</sup>. Throughout, I reproduce Lindenberger's translation.

Saying 5 *A blow for a serving-boy, a rebuke for a slave-girl,  
and for all your servants discipline!*

The internal parallelism<sup>7</sup> of the first line - *mḥ'h l'lm // k'[y'] lhnt* - shows that, like Sayings 29 and 30, this saying is a couplet, not a tricolon as set out by Lindenberger<sup>8</sup>.

Saying 9 *The lion catches the scent(?) of the stag in (his)  
hidden den(?) and he...  
and sheds its blood and eats its flesh.  
Just so is the concourse of men(?)*

Such sapiential reflections occur in the OT (Job 39,5-6) and the Legend of Sargon (in broken context)<sup>9</sup> as J. Westenholz has observed<sup>10</sup>. On the 'third' line Lindenberger comments: "The symmetry of *wdmh y'šd // wšrh y'kl* leads one to suspect that the entire saying (except perhaps the final clause) is couched in quasi-poetic form"<sup>11</sup> and recovery of the word-pair *bšr // dm* in a recently edited Aramaic poem<sup>12</sup> lends support to his argument.

Saying 12 *There are two things which are good,  
and a third which is pleasing to Šamaš (etc.)*

The function of many such numerical sayings<sup>13</sup> is delayed explicitation: one does not know what the last item will be until it comes, as a climax<sup>14</sup>.

Saying 13 *Her kingdom is eternal*

This extract from the six-line description of Wisdom personified which comprises Saying 13 –with the

6. Saying 1, "What is stronger (louder?) than a braying ass?", evokes a couplet from the Babylonian Flood Story: "The flood bellows like a bull/Like a howling vulture the wind sounds" (Atr III iii 15-16, as restored and translated by J.G. Westenholz, *JNES* 43[1984]76).

7. On internal parallelism see my paper "Internal Parallelism in Ugaritic Verse", *Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici sul Vicino Oriente antico* 1(1984)53-67 and "Internal Parallelism in Hebrew Verse and the Origins of Parallelism" [in preparation].

8. Lindenberger, *Proverbs*, 53 (*thesis*, 74).

9. For example, "The wolf did not escape the blood..." (col. ii 13); text and translation in B. Lewis, *The Sargon Legend: A Study of the Akkadian Text and the Tale of the Hero who was Exposed at Birth* (ASOR Dissertation Series 4). Cambridge, Mass. 1980, p. 29.

10. Westenholz, *JNES* 43(1984)77 (= review of Lewis' book).

11. The wording has been altered slightly to "Note the quasi-poetic symmetry of *wdmh y'šd // wšrh y'kl*" in Lindenberger, *Proverbs*, 61 (my quote is from *thesis*, 92).

12. Steiner-Nims, "Polemical Poem" (see footnote 3), p. 95 lines 6-7: "Let us eat meat (*bšr*) and become fat; Let us cause blood (*dm*) to flow and drink to saturation"; see their comments, pp. 101-102. Lindenberger, *Proverbs* (*thesis*), 19 discussed the word-pair, but the Aramaic poem in Demotic script had not then been edited.

13. See now H.-P. Rüger, "Die gestaffelter Zahlensprüche des Alten Testaments und aram. Achikar 92", *VT* 31(1981)229-234.

14. See, too, Sayings 22, 29 and 30. For examples in Hebrew cf. M.J. Dahood, *Psalms III*. Garden City 1970, pp. 51, 52, 56, 57, 115, 128, 201, 232, 245 and 260; also, N. Airoldi, "Esodo 22, 28a: Esplicitazione ritardata", *Bib* 54(1973)63-64. Lambert discusses this feature in *JAOS* 103(1983)214 apropos a Neo-Babylonian lament.

restoration [hk]mt[h] proposed by Lindenberger<sup>15</sup>— accords well with the alliterative Ugaritic passage which he quotes<sup>16</sup> and evokes the expression *mlk 'lmk*, “your perpetual rule” (KTU 1.2 IV 10)<sup>17</sup>.

Saying 20 *When a royal word is commanded you,  
it is a burning fire (etc.)*

Similar imagery may underlie the description of *Yammu's* twin messengers delivering his message to El (KTU 1.2 I 32-33):

*išt. išt. yitmr.  
hrb. lšt [lš]nhm.  
“(like) a fire, (like) two fires they appeared,  
a whetted sword their tongue”.*

More apposite is the passage from the (Middle Assyrian) Fable of the Fox, where Fox accuses Wolf of spreading false reports:

*“You, Wolf, are an image of ‘filth’  
an evildoer, who cuts his friend’s throat.  
why do you spread flames to the (?) of the (?) reed-thicket?  
(Why do you) send up smoke from the dried up forest?  
set on fire... the bitumen pits?”<sup>18</sup>.*

Saying 22 *I have tasted even the bitter medlar,  
and have eaten endives(?),  
but there is nothing more bitter than poverty.*

As in Sayings 12 (see above) 21,29 and 30, the ‘bite’ of the proverb is reserved to the end, another example, therefore, of delayed explicitation. The term *mrrt*’ has been discussed extensively<sup>19</sup> while *hsyn* may have its analogue in Ugaritic<sup>20</sup> in spite of Lindenberger’s hesitation<sup>21</sup>.

Saying 25 *A king is like the Merciful,  
even his voice is haughty.  
Who is there who could stand him  
except one with whom El is?*

Lindenberger comments that the adjective *rḥmn* (“merciful”) “is an epithet of El, who is mentioned by name in the last clause of the saying”<sup>22</sup>. An addition to the material he has collected in support of his view<sup>23</sup>

15. Lindenberger, *Proverbs*, 68-69 (thesis, 117-118), correcting Grelot.

16. Lindenberger, *Proverbs* 283, n. 129 (thesis, 122, n. 22); the passage is *think il hkmk em elm*, “Wise is your decree, O El; your wisdom is to eternity” (KTU 1.4 IV 41-42).

17. See, too, my comments in *Bib* 62(1981)101-102, and reference there to Dan. 3,33 and 4,31.

18. Text and translation: W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* Oxford 1960, pp. 194-195, rev. 13-18. The word *ṣpiltu*, lit. ‘filth’ means ‘backbiting’ (so Lambert, p. 195, see his note, p. 313); cf. von Soden, *AHW*, p. 1380: ‘Schmähung’. On the Aram. verb used in Saying 20 see now P. Grelot, “On the Root *‘bq/‘bš* in Ancient Aramaic and Ugaritic”, *JSS* 1(1956)202-205, and his “Complementary Note on the Semitic Root *‘bq/‘bš*”, *JSS* 2(1957)195 where he discusses *‘bc* in 1QApGen xx 8-9, the ‘missing link’ in the development *‘bq* → *‘bc* → *‘bc*.

19. Especially, D. Pardee, “The Semitic Root *mrr* and the Etymology of Ugaritic *m(r) // brk*”, *UF* 10(1978)249-288.

20. H.A. Hoffner, “Hittite and Ugaritic Words for ‘Lettuce’”, *JCS* 25(1973)234; however, cf. M. Dietrich - O. Loretz, “Ug. *ḥs/šwn* ‘Thymian(?)’”, *UF* 10(1978)431.

21. Lindenberger, *Proverbs* 243, n. 253 (thesis 188, n. 12). On *ḥdh* + *lbb* in Saying 24 see my comments, *VT* 31(1981)92-95.

22. Lindenberger, *Proverbs* 93 (thesis 194).

23. Notably in *UF* 14(1982)107-111.

comes from the Assyrian-Aramaic bilingual inscription from Tell Fekheriye<sup>24</sup>. Line 5 of the Aramaic version refers to Adad as *'lh rḥmn*, 'merciful god', which corresponds to DINGIR LID<sup>u</sup> = *ilu rēmē'u* of line 6 in the Assyrian text<sup>25</sup>. The evidence is oblique, since *'lh* means 'god', not 'El'. However, in the first and last lines of Saying 13 there may be the 'break-up' of *b<sup>e</sup>l šmyn*<sup>26</sup> – and break-up is a poetic device attested elsewhere in Aramaic verse<sup>27</sup> – so that here too we may possibly have the break-up of *\*'l rḥmyn*.

Saying 34 *There is no lion in the sea,  
therefore the sea-snake(?) is called labbu*<sup>28</sup>.

Similar pairing of 'lions' and sea-creatures is apparent in a mythological text from Ras Shamra (KTU 1.5 I 14-16 // 1.133:2-5).

*pnpš npš lbim thw  
lm brlt anḥr bym*

"My appetite is the appetite of lions of the steppe,  
or/and the voracity(?) of dolphins in the sea"<sup>29</sup>.

In the Aramaic proverb there is a pun on Akkadian *labbu* = "lion" (poetic synonym for *nēšu*) and mythological sea-dragon, and as Lindenberger shows, a cognate of this word in its second meaning is Ugaritic *lm*<sup>30</sup>. The word-pair *thw // ym* has a reflex in Saying 110, discussed below.

Saying 40 *Hear, o my son:  
Harvest any harvest,  
and do any job (etc)*

Lindenberger points out "this is the earliest occurrence in Aram of the vocative particle *yā*" and mentions that it is found, too, in Ugaritic as well as Arabic, Mandaic and Syriac<sup>31</sup>. He also discusses the idiom *'bd kl 'bydh*<sup>32</sup> and it may perhaps occur in another Aramaic papyrus from Elephantine if the restoration *'[l r'bdw]* is correct<sup>33</sup>.

24. A. Abou-Assaf, P. Bordreuil, A.R. Millard, *La Statue de Tell Fekheriye et son inscription bilingue assyro-araméenne* (Etudes Assyriologiques 7). Paris 1982. See, also, A.R. Millard, P. Bordreuil, "A Statue from Syria with Assyrian and Aramaic Inscriptions", *BA* 45(1982)135-141, with bibliography and J.C. Greenfield, A. Shaffer, "Notes on the Akkadian-Aramaic Bilingual Statue from Tell Fekheriye", *Iraq* 45(1983)109-116. And now T. Muraoka, "The Tell Fekheriye Bilingual Inscription and Early Aramaic", *Abr-Nahrain* 22(1983-83)79-117, again with bibliography.

25. Abou-Assaf, Bordreuil, Millard, *La Statue*, pp. 18 and 30; Greenfield-Shaffer, "Notes", p. 114 comment that *ramē'u*, with syncopated sonants, looks like a spoken form.

26. Lindenberger, *UF* 14(1982)115. M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*. Winona Lake 1980, pp. 112-113, 371-377 uses the term 'binomination' when this device involves proper (and geographic) names. See Berlin's comments, *UF* 15(1983)14.

27. Steiner-Nims, "Polemical Poem" (see footnote 3), pp. 104-105 suggest that in line 12 of the Poem the phrase *qy w'mr*, "he speaks up and says", has been broken up over parallel lines.

28. To Lindenberger's comment that *'l/r* is not a normal variant in northwest Semitic cognates", *Proverbs* 102 (thesis 218), with respect to Saying 32 can be added the following: Inner-Aramaic *'rh ('rw / hbw*; Aramaic *'rh('rw) / Ug. hl* (Akka. *allu*) - discussed by J. Ribera i Florit, *AnOr* 1(1983)231. Ug. *prsh / Akk. naparsuḥu/napalsuḥu* (see Watson, *Newsletter for Ugaritic Studies* 28[1982]9). A. Fitzgerald, "The Interchange of L, N, and R, in Biblical Hebrew", *JBL* 97(1978)481-488 and the interesting fluctuation between *l* and *r* in "Eblaite", on which cf. L. Cagni, ed., *La Lingua di Ebla*. Naples 1981, pp. 19 and 32 (Gelb), p. 260 (Pettinato) etc.

29. For full details and bibliography for this much discussed passage cf. Del Olmo Lete, *MLC*, p. 214 and *Interpretación de la mitología cananea. Estudios de semántica Ugarítica*. Valencia 1984, pp. 65-67.

30. The etymology of *labbu* proposed (from *lawūm*, 'to encircle') and mention of the Ug. cognate *lm* in particular, are interesting. J.A. Emerton, "Leviathan and the *lm*: the vocalization of the Ugaritic word for dragon", *VT* 32(1982)326 suggests the spelling to be *litānu* - a proposal confirmed by S.V. Udd, "More on the Vocalization of *lm*", *VT* 33(1983)509-510.

31. Lindenberger, *Proverbs*, 121 (thesis, 267); he adds that it may also occur in Punic and the Deir Alla Inscriptions.

32. Lindenberger, *Proverbs*, 121 (thesis, 267).

33. "Do no work"; text and translation: P. Grelot, "Sur le 'papyrus pascal' d'Eléphantine" in *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Henri Cazelles*, edd. A. Caquot - M. Delcor (*AOAT* 212). Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981, pp. 163-172, line 6.

Saying 44 *For,*

*a man's charm is his truthfulness,  
his repulsion is the lying of lips.*

The chiasmus here in the form *ḥn-gbr ḥymnwth // sn'th kbdt-špwth* reinforces the antithetic parallelism<sup>34</sup>. Similar vocabulary is used in the Aramaic 'Polemical Poem'<sup>35</sup> and in Prov. 10,18a.<sup>36</sup>

Saying 46 *The liar should have is throat (lit. neck) cut (etc.).*

To the data from Mesopotamia collected by Linderberger on this topic<sup>37</sup> should be added the epithet used of the god Nabu: *pārim napištu raggu*, "who cuts the throat of the wicked"<sup>38</sup> as well as the description of Wolf as one "who cuts his friend's throat" by slander (cited above in connection with Saying 20)<sup>39</sup>.

Saying 50-52

*My distress is my own fault,  
in whose sight can I be vindicated?  
My own son spied out my house,  
and uttered slander to strangers.  
He was a false witness against me,  
who, then, will declare me innocent?  
That which poisoned me came from my house;  
against whom can I struggle?*

This proverb stands out as an eight-line stanza of "four poetic bicola"<sup>40</sup>. It is interesting, too, that the theme of this mini-poem is akin to the theme of the Babylonian 'Poem of the Righteous Sufferer' in Ludlul I 77-97. In these lines the Sufferer complains that everyone, including close friends and even his family shun him and defame him<sup>41</sup>.

The Aramaic 'Polemical Poem' includes the same motif, even to the extent of equating slander with venom, as in Aḥiqar<sup>42</sup>.

Saying 53 *Do not reveal your secrets before your friends,  
in case your name should be diminished before them.*

There would appear to be wordplay in the form of paronomasia<sup>43</sup> here between the verbs *gly*, "to

34. On chiasmic parallelism in Aramaic prose cf. B. Porten, "Structure and Chiasm in Aramaic Contracts and Letters", in J.W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity*. Hildesheim 1981, pp. 169-182.

35. The expression *l'-'rtyn b'pymy*, "no duplicity/slander (is) in my mouth", occurs twice (lines 3 and 9); text and translation: Steiner-Nims, "Polemical Poem" (see footnote 3), p. 95; discussion, pp. 97-98.

36. The word-pair "first" // "last" of Saying 45 is discussed in footnote 63.

37. Linderberger, *Proverbs*, 130, 256, n. 395, 257, n. 397 (*thesis*, 291). See, too, Prov. 21, 23.

39. Cited in another connection by W.G. Lambert, *JAOS* 103(1983)213.

39. The expression "in his father's name or in his mother's name" of Saying 49 is another example of internal parallelism, though the Saying itself is prosaic.

40. Linderberger, *Proverbs*, 136 (contrast his *thesis* where he treated these Sayings individually).

41. Text and translation in Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, pp. 34-35. Also, Leichty, *Essays... Finkelstein*. Hamden 1977, p. 145.

42. The couplet closing Stanza 2, *ḥmth b'p'mh / mrrh mn-'tḥt l'šmḥ*, "Venom is in their mouth; poison under their tongue!" - Steiner-Nims, "Polemical Poem" (see footnote 3), p. 95, lines 11-12 - contrasts with "No slander (is) in my mouth" of lines 3 and 9 (cited in footnote 35).

43. To cite T. Todorov's definitions in *Théories du symbole* (Paris 1977), pp. 309-310: "occurrence unique du même, *syllèpse*"; "occurrence multiple du même, *antanaclase*"; "occurrence multiple du semblable, *paronomase*"; "occurrence unique du semblable, *contamination (mot-valise) / calembours*".

reveal" and *qll*, "to lower, diminish". The couplet is also marked by partial chiasmus<sup>44</sup> and the repetitive word-pair *qdm // qdm*<sup>45</sup>.

Saying 66 *May El twist the mouth of the treacherous,  
and tear out (his) tongue.*

Comparable is Ps. 12,4: "May Yahweh cut off all smooth lips, (every) tongue which utters great words"<sup>46</sup>. A similar, but again not identical threat concludes a royal grant from Ras Shamra, written in Akkadian. *Tabiyanu* and his sons used a copy of the royal seal to dispossess *Kalbeya* and his sons. The document sets matters to rights and ends: "If, in the future, *Tabiyanu* and his sons [should undertake?] any proceedings against *Kalbeya* (or) his sons, their tongue will be cut off"<sup>47</sup>.

Saying 75 *[The city] of the wicked will be swept away in the day of storm,  
and into ruin will its gates fall (etc.)  
for the spoil of the wicked shall perish.*

The first two lines of this tricolon are in chiasmic parallelism but more interesting is the word-pair "city // gates". The same word-pair is attested in a Babylonian proverb:

*ālu ša kakkāšu lā dannū  
nakru ina pān abullišu ul ippaṭṭar*  
"A city whose weapons are not powerful:  
the enemy does not depart from before its gate"<sup>48</sup>.

The word-pair also occurs, reversed, in Isa. 14,31:

*hylyly š<sup>c</sup>r z<sup>c</sup>qy-<sup>c</sup>yr*  
"Wail, O gate! Cry, O city!"

These texts<sup>49</sup> suggest that Lindenberger's restoration of *qryt* in the Aramaic proverb is probably correct<sup>50</sup>.

Saying 77 *If a wicked man grasps the fringe of your garment,  
leave it in his hand (etc.)*

In Ugaritic and Hebrew the idiom "to seize the hem (of a garment)" means to beg someone for something<sup>51</sup> and if the same idiom is present here then the proverb may have to be re-interpreted, though no ready explanation springs to mind.

Saying 106 *A man said one day to the wild ass:  
'Let me ride on you and I will provide for you'  
The wild ass replied:  
'Yours be your care and your fodder.  
As for me, let me not see your riding!'*

44. In the form NP<sub>2</sub> V M // V NP<sub>2</sub> M.

45. In Saying 59 the fourfold repetition of 'l contributes to the overall quasi-acrostic effect.

46. If correct, the rendering "every tongue that speaks distortions" proposed by M.J. Dahood, *Psalms I* (Garden City 1968), p. 73 would be apposite but his version is very conjectural. P.C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*. Waco 1983, pp. 135-136 is more cautious.

47. Text in *PRU III*, p. 98: 34 (= RS 16.249: 34).

48. Text in Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, p. 245: iv 56; his translation: "The enemy does not depart from before the gate of a city whose weapons are not powerful" (p. 250); similarly, *CAD A/1*, p. 85.

49. To which, perhaps, Ps. 122, 2b-3a can be added.

50. Lindenberger, *Proverbs*, 171 (*thesis*, 387) following Halévy.

51. Most recently, E. L. Greenstein, "To Grasp the Hem" in Ugaritic Literature", *VT* 32(1982)217-218.

In fact, the man's offer is couched in a line with (weak) inner parallelism:

[rkb] 'lyk w'n[h] 'sblnk.

The animal's reply, then, uses the core words of this line (*rkb*, *sbl*) in inverted sequence, expanding the line to a couplet, a technique known in other verse traditions<sup>52</sup>:

[lk yhw]y sbwlyk wkstk  
w'nh rkbyk l' 'hzh.

Saying 107 *Between skin and my sandal may no pebble get into my foot.*

It has gone unnoticed that this obscure saying may be compared with the Old Babylonian omen concerning king *Amar-Su'en*, who died *ina nišik šēnim*, "from the bite of a shoe"<sup>53</sup>. Perhaps the proverb is an illustration of dire consequences resulting from what would appear to be only a minor cause.

Saying 110 *Do not show an Arab the sea  
or a Sidonian the steppe,  
for their occupations are different.*

This proverb uses two parallel phrases (or inner parallelism) in combination with a word-pair which make it somewhat less prosaic in character. In fact, it cannot be ruled out that the last line is a later explanatory gloss. The word-pair, *ym' // b[r']* may correspond to Ugaritic *thw*, 'waste' // *ym*, 'sea' in KTU 5 I 14-16 cited in full, above, under Saying 34, though, as is evident, the ordering of the components is inverted.

The comments collected above show that the Aramaic Proverbs of Aḥiqar exhibit quite a number of poetic devices and techniques. These include the following (with references to the Proverbs/Sayings in brackets): alliteration (2, 3, 16, 17, 18, 20, 25, 33, 40, 107); assonance (26); break-up of a stereotype phrase (13, 25); chiasmic parallelism (10, 44, 60, 68, 75, 106); delayed explicitation (12, 22, 29, 30); hendiadys (40, 50, 52)<sup>54</sup>; internal parallelism (5, 9, 29, 30, 49, 68, 106, 110), multiple rhetorical questions (50-52), tricola (18, 21, 22, 23, 26, 33, 41, 44, 45, 47, 67, 68, 70, 73, 75, 76, 110 etc.); wordplay (11, 27, 41, 53, 73, 106). The list, of course, is incomplete even if Lindenberger's own remarks are added to it, There is evidently room for further research, for example, on the use of *kl*, "all" as in Saying 74

[s']dyq 'n[š] b'drh  
kl nḥwhy hwyn

"The upright: a man to his aid!

All who clash with him are laid low",

which illustrates the general tendency for *kl* to occur in the first or last line of a strophe or stanza<sup>55</sup>. Envelope figure, too, occurs (e.g. *mlt mlk* "the royal command", in Saying 20) while another feature that requires fuller study is the use of word-pairs<sup>56</sup>. Lindenberger has commented on this<sup>57</sup> and as an aid to later research I have added to his list, inserting repetitive pairs as significant, too.

52. See my paper, cited footnote 7, p. 59, for Ug. examples.

53. YOS 10 18: rev. 61 and 25: obv, 32; 26:ii 53; see the very brief discussions of this text by J. Cooper in B. Alster, ed., *Death in Mesopotamia*. Copenhagen 1980, p. 99 and by U. Jeyes, *ibid.* pp. 110 and 115, n. 55, with references. The similarity may simply be superficial, of course.

54. Mentioned by Lindenberger, *Proverbs (thesis)*, 267, 316.

55. See, too, Sayings 14b and 15; also, VanderKam, "Poetry of IQApGen, XX, 2-8a" (see footnote 3), p. 63. Relevant, too, is H. Ringgren, "The omitting of *kol* in Hebrew parallelism", *VT* 32(1982)99-103.

56. A. Berlin, "Parallel Word Pairs: A Linguistic Explanation", *UF* 15(1983)7-16 concludes that "the linguistic rules underlying word associations also seem to fit when applied to word pairs, and in many cases provide better explanations for certain pairs than were heretofore available. Moreover, the theory of word associations is a 'unified theory'... (it) shows that the pairing of *yql* - *qil* forms and the break-up of idioms are of the same nature as the pairing of synonyms and antonyms, etc... (and) poetic pairings are the same as those in prose". However, she does not take into account the factor of density. Y. Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of*

'b // 'm	'father' // 'mother' (49) <sup>58</sup> ;
'mn // kdb	'truth' // 'lying' (44);
'rb // 'rb	'treachery' // 'treachery' (16);
'šd // 'kl	'shed (blood)' // 'eat' (9);
dm // bšr	'blood' // 'flesh' (9);
hl' // mlh	'sand' // 'salt' (29);
hly // mr(r)	'sweet' // 'bitter' (59) <sup>59</sup> ;
tb // tbyr	'good' // 'broken' (27);
ywm // [ly]lh	'day' // 'night' (14a);
ym' // b[r']	'the sea' // the steppe' (110);
lhm // [hmr <sup>2</sup> ]	'bread' // ['wine'(?)] (91) <sup>60</sup> ;
mdd // lbb	'character' // 'heart' (68);
mwbl' // t <sup>c</sup> wn	'burden' // 'be laden' (10);
mh' // šbq	'beat' // 'leave (alone)' (4);
m(w)t // hyh	'die' // 'live' (4);
nš // t <sup>c</sup> n	'lift' // 'load' (10, 29);
nš' // nsb	'lift' // 'carry' (30);
'bd // 'mh	'slave' // 'maid' (6) <sup>61</sup> ;
'yn // lbb	'eye(s)' // 'heart' (76) <sup>61a</sup> ;
pm // lbb	'mouth' // 'heart' (15);
pm // lšn	'mouth' // 'tongue' (66) <sup>62</sup> ;
pm // mlhm	'mouth' // 'battle' (16);
qdmn // 'hrn	'first' // 'last' (45) <sup>63</sup> ;
qdm // qdm	'before' // 'before' (53) <sup>64</sup> ;
qsr // 'bd	'harvest' // 'work' (40,40);
qrb // rhiq	'near' // 'far' (96);
[qryt] // tr <sup>c</sup>	['city'] // 'gate(s)' (75)
qšt // ht	'bow' // arrow (39, 41, 93);
rm // špl	'exalted' // 'humbled' (60) <sup>65</sup> ;
šgy' // z <sup>c</sup> r	'multitude' // 'meagre number' (24);
šm // šm	'name' // 'name' (49) <sup>66</sup> ;
šmr // ntr	'protect' // 'guard' (69);

*Word-Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures* (AOAT 210) (Neukirchen-Vluyn 1984), brought to my attention by J. Healey, is unavailable to me.

57. Lindenberger, *Proverbs*, 24 (*thesis*, 10-20) lists *dm // bšr*; *nš' // t<sup>c</sup>n*; *pm // lbb*; *pm // lšn*; *šmr // ntr* and *tr<sup>c</sup>yn // tlt'* ('two' // 'three').

58. On 'kl + šb<sup>c</sup> in Sayings 40 and 42 see Lindenberger, *Proverbs*, 121 (*thesis*, 267).

59. The same antonymic pairing recurs in Saying 90 ("Hunger makes the bitter sweet...") and in the "Polemical Poem", lines 10-12a; see the comments of Steiner-Nims, "Polemical Poem" (see footnote 3), p. 103.

60. For a similar pair in Ug. cf. KTU 1.23: 6 *lhm blhm ay / šty bhm yn ay*, "Eat of any food, drink of intoxicating wine".

61. Cf. *šym // lht* in Saying 5.

61a. Cf. Prov. 23,33.

62. The same word-pair recurs at least three times in the "Polemical Poem".

63. Comparable pairings are used in Isa. 9,11; 41,4b; 44,6; 48,12 and Job 18,20.

64. Cf. *el // el*, "in (her) presence" // "in (her) presence" in KTU 1.15 iv 17-18. Also, the repeated "parallelism" of *qdm* in Sfire i A 7-12.

65. Cf. *rm // špl* in KTU 1.23:32.

66. The same pair is used in KTU 1.2 iv 11-12 and 18-19.

<i>špyr</i> // <i>tb</i>	'good, fine' // 'happy' (68);
<i>špyr</i> // <i>rhym</i>	'good' // 'pleasing' (12);
<i>tbn</i> // <i>prn</i>	'straw' // 'bran' (30) <sup>67</sup> .

Certain impressions can be gained even from this incomplete list, notably the high number of sets beginning with *q*- or the fact that *ns'* and *pm* are probably "A-words", but such impressions will need refinement.

Of particular interest is the 'asterisk'<sup>68</sup> which the scribe of the Elephantine papyrus used "to separate the end of one saying from the initial word of another beginning on the same line"<sup>69</sup>. Each of the Proverbs, then, can be considered a self-contained poem or at least a stanza (or strophe) and the asterisk (really the letter *aleph* according to Lindenberger) is of great significance in determining the beginnings and ends of such units. Comparable, though by no means identical, is the red dot used in certain Egyptian texts to mark off the ends of lines<sup>70</sup>.

The preliminary findings represented by the observations set out above show that the Proverbs of Aḥiqar belong to the mainstream of ancient Semitic versification and that more can be learned of their specific character by inner-Aramaic comparisons and by turning to ancient Near Eastern poetry generally. Lindenberger has established the text and set the ball rolling but there is still plenty of scope for further study.

67. Comparable is *ḥšš* // *qš*, "chaff" // "stubble" in Isa. 33,10; cf. too Jer. 23,28 and Job 41,19-21. To the list of word-pairs can be added the triple set *syn* // *dn* // *pm*, 'eyes' // 'ear' // 'mouth' in Saying 67; cf. Ps. 115,5-6 and *RSP* // IX 42 (p.396).

68. Lindenberger, *Proverbs*, 305-309( = Appendix B; *thesis*, 537-542 = Appendix D).

69. Lindenberger, *Proverbs*, 305 (*thesis*, 537).

70. J.L. Foster, "Thought Couplets in Khety's Hymn to the Inundation", *JNES* 34(1975)1-29 and "Sinuhe: The Ancient Egyptian Genre of Narrative Verse", *JNES* 39(1980)89-117. Also, Davis, *JAOS* 104(1984)359.