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Putting the Pearls of Wisdom in Order: The Unique Necklace by Ibn ‘Abdrabbih

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Abstract:

This study discusses the form and function of the chapter list that we find in the preface of the *adab* compilation *al-‘Iqd al-farīd* by Ibn ‘Abdrabbih (246-328/860-940), and that sometimes appears in manuscripts with the layout of a table of contents. It suggests that this evidence shows that the list represents a transitional stage in the history of the table of contents in the Arabic book, the transition being that from a tool for exposition of the content towards a tool for navigation of that content, and that it reflects a change in reading practices.

Keywords:

Adab, compilation, list, reading practices, table of contents, *taṣnīf*

“I have entitled it the Book (of the Necklace)
because of the varied gems of the speech it contains,
which are finely threaded together and beautifully organized.”¹

Introduction

This precious necklace of gems of speech (*jawāhir al-kalām*), so “beautifully organized” (*ma‘a dikkat al-silk wa-ḥusn al-niẓām*), refers to one of the most successful works of early

¹ Ibn ‘Abdrabbih, *al-‘Iqd al-Farīd*, 18.

adab, the [Unique] Necklace (*al-ʿIqd [al-farīd]*) by Ibn ʿAbdrabbih (246-328/860-940), a classic of recognized and established value.² In what follows, I will first discuss briefly this “beautiful order” and then focus particularly on the form and distinctive use of the list of chapters that we find in the preface, which summarizes this order in abbreviated form. It will be argued in the second part of this paper that the list in the *ʿIqd*’s introduction represents a transitional stage in the history of the table of contents, from a tool for exposition of the work’s content towards a tool for the navigation of that content, and probably reflects a change in reading practices. It also provides an example of the way copyists increased the accessibility of an early “big book” by transforming a list of chapter headings into a table of contents.

The *ʿIqd*, a Caliphal Work

The *ʿIqd* by Ibn ʿAbdrabbih is one of those works that features regularly as a representative of early encyclopaedism in Arabic literature, since it treats a broad range of subjects in a systematic way. Hilary Kilpatrick, for instance, sees the *ʿIqd* as a model example of the category of “*adab* encyclopaedia,” a category she defines as “a work designed to provide the basic knowledge in those domains with which the average cultured man may be expected to be acquainted. It is characterized by organization into chapters or books on the different subjects treated.”³ Bilal Orfali, in contrast, proposes to see the *ʿIqd* as “encyclopaedic anthology”: “the former because it attempts to cover all subjects of conversation and the latter because it selects the best examples of their treatment in prose and poetry.”⁴ The *ʿIqd*, in fact, is a thematic hybrid between both an anthology and an encyclopaedic oeuvre. On the one hand, with its almost all-encompassing thematic scope, it transmits an impressive wealth of diverse historical *akhbār*, legendary accounts and notices about a high variety of topics, including extensive historical passages, and distributed across

² Ibn ʿAbdrabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*. The adjective *al-farīd* seems to have been added later; earlier manuscripts do not have it and indirect transmissions always refer to the book simply as *ʿIqd*; cf. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 27.

³ Kilpatrick, *A Genre*, 34.

⁴ Orfali, *A Sketch Map*, 41.

twenty-five book-chapters (*kutub*).⁵ On the other hand, it has a strong focus on poetry (Ibn ‘Abdrabbih quotes around 10.000 verses)⁶ and related topics, like prosody, rhyme, and scansion.

As I have discussed in a recent article, we can also detect a certain ambivalence in its reception.⁷ The reconstruction of its trajectory and varying impact has shown that this work, originally composed in fourth/tenth century Umayyad Andalusia, a region then perceived as located on the periphery of the Islamic world,⁸ first underwent phases of controversial appreciations as an anthology—i.e., as collection of beautiful poems and prose pieces—until it experienced a renaissance in the context of the Mamluk apogee of encyclopaedias, when the *‘Iqd*, now read as encyclopaedia, fit perfectly within the cultural panorama of the day. This shows again how important the reception-filter of the Mamluk period was for Arabic literature—first, as bottleneck for the transmission of works from earlier periods, and second, as a distorting lens through which we read many works from the Abbasid period. Latterly, in the Nahḍa period, the *‘Iqd* ended up becoming a paramount example of metropolitan Abbasid belles-lettres of the “Golden Age” and a model of classic style to be read in schools.⁹

⁵ For the historical passages in the *‘Iqd*, see Toral-Niehoff, *History in Adab Context*.

⁶ Veglión Elías de Molins, *El Collar Único*, 67.

⁷ Toral-Niehoff, *The Iqd al-Farīd*.

⁸ “Periphery” is understood here as a phenomenon of emic perception. As Ibn ‘Abdrabbih states in his introduction, he himself located al-Andalus in the periphery: “our Maghrib, despite its remoteness, and our land, despite its isolation” (Ibn ‘Abdrabbih, *al-‘Iqd al-Farīd*, I, 18; and see below). On the other hand, Mashriqī universal historians like al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) and al-Ya‘qūbī (d. after 292/905) barely even mention al-Andalus, and Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 338/998) does not list a single work from al-Andalus. It was not until the fifth/eleventh century that al-Andalus entered the mental map of Mashriqī scholars. On this issue, see Fierro, *The Other Edge*; and the project led by Maribel Fierro and Mayte Penelas, *Local Contexts and Global Dynamics. Al-Andalus and the Maghreb in the Islamic East*.

⁹ Rifā‘a al-Tahtāwī (1801-1873 CE), for example, included a lengthy quotation from the *‘Iqd*, probably based on an Egyptian manuscript, in his famous *Talkhīs Ibrīz*, a travel report about his stay in Paris, first published in 1834 CE. The *‘Iqd* became also one of the earliest works of

Originally, the *ʿIqd* was most probably collected on commission of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Nāṣir (r. 316-355/912-961) to promote Iraqi *adab* in Cordoba in the context of his caliphal ideology, the intention of which was to adapt and acculturate the local elites to Abbasid cultural models and attitudes.¹⁰ This historical context explains why its content was almost exclusively drawn from the traditions circulating in Iraq that had been imported previously to al-Andalus by Andalusian scholars, and is probably also the reason for its all-encompassing, universal, “global” and perennial (caliphal) dimension: The *ʿIqd* provides the reader with a selection of topics as broad as possible so that the reader could learn how to be an *adīb* in the fashion of Abbasid Baghdad.¹¹ In this regard, Ibn ʿAbdrabbih states in his programmatic introduction:

After this exordium, I note that people of every generation and experts of every nation have spoken about literature and have philosophized about branches of learning in every tongue and in every age; and that every one of them has given his utmost and done his best to summarize the beautiful ideas of the ancients and to select the gems of the sayings of past generations. They have done this so profusely that their summaries have need of summarization and their selections have need of winnowing down.¹²

On the other hand, Ibn ʿAbdrabbih for his part also seems to have used the *ʿIqd* subtly to promote his own poetical oeuvre beyond the boundaries of al-Andalus, hoping it would find a readership throughout the Arab world. This means that the *ʿIqd* also served as a tool for

adab printed in the Būlāq House, namely in 1876 CE, which was followed by eight reprints or more. Later it was used as teaching material as, for instance, *Mukhtār al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, compiled by a group of teachers of the *Madrasat al-qaḍāʾ al-sharʿī* in Cairo and printed in 1913 (cf. Toral, *The Iqd al-farīd*). For the “discovery” of the classics in Arab modernity, see the recent study by El-Shamsy, *Recovering*.

¹⁰ Toral-Niehoff, *Writing for the Caliphate*, passim.

¹¹ Toral-Niehoff, *Writing for the Caliphate*, 87-90.

¹² Ibn ʿAbdrabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-Farīd*, 15; *The Unique Necklace*, 1.

auto-editing its author's poems in an anthology.¹³ Ibn 'Abdrabbih was celebrated in his lifetime as poet of *ghazal* and *madīh*, and he wanted to place his own oeuvre in relation to that of his predecessors in the central lands of Islam.¹⁴ In this regard, he explains himself in his introduction as follows:

I have adorned each book of the "Necklace" with examples of poetry similar in idea to the prose passages it contains and parallel to them in meaning. I have added, in addition to these examples, the most extraordinary of my own poems; so that he who studies this book of ours may know that our Maghrib [referring to al-Andalus, and put in contrast to the central lands of Islam], despite its remoteness, and our land, despite its isolation, has its own share of poetry and prose.¹⁵

Altogether, the *'Iqd* was a way of showing that Cordoba could compete on all levels with Baghdad.

Sorting the Gems of Wisdom

Like most other authors of *adab* collections, Ibn 'Abdrabbih takes the authorial position of a mere compiler of valuable material from the past. He is a typical example of an author-compiler whose authorial voice has to be established first by studying the introductory passages where he addresses directly the reader and presents his program, and second by examining the degree of his intervention in the transmitted material.¹⁶ He explicitly refers to the importance of this aspect in his introduction, making clear that "thematic order" (*taṣnīf*)

¹³ For this technique in anthologies, see Gründler, *Motiv vs. Genre*, 81. For the general importance of emulation in Andalusī letters, see Terés, *Algunos aspectos*.

¹⁴ For his *ghazal* poetry, see Continente, *Notas sobre la poesía amorosa*; Cowell, *Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi and his 'Ghazal' Verse*.

¹⁵ Ibn 'Abdrabbih, *al-'Iqd al-Farīd*, 18. There are 1.427 verses by him spread in the text (*Werkmeister, Quellenuntersuchungen*, 25).

¹⁶ For a survey on the state of the research about concepts of authorship in Arabic literature, see Behzadi and Hämeen-Anttila, *Concepts of Authorship*.

and “selection” (*ikhtiyār*) are the central principles in his composition. As will be discussed later, these were also the characteristic features of the *ʿIqd* that impressed the readers and became key for its later success.

Thus, he states that the title—the “necklace”—is not merely ornamental, but points to the subtle architecture of the work: knowledge is presented as a necklace of twenty-five precious pearls and, following this metaphor, each book-title corresponds to the name of a gem or pearl. The twenty-five monographic *kutub* cover various subjects and are ordered according to a hierarchy of importance. Furthermore, Ibn ʿAbdrabbih devotes a large portion of his introduction to the explanation of his organizational principles. On the one hand, he says about selection (*ikhtiyār*):

I have compiled this work (*allaftu*)¹⁷ and selected (*takhayyartu*) its jewels from the choice gems of literature and the superlative passages of eloquence. It is therefore the quintessence of jewels (*jawhar al-jawhar*) and the kernel of a kernel (*lubāb al-lubāb*). My merit in it is only that of compiling (*taʿlīf*) the reports, exercising good choice (*ikhtiyār*), summarizing well, and writing an introduction at the beginning of every book. Everything else has been taken from the mouths of the learned and traditionally received from the wise and the literati. Selecting speech is more difficult than composing it. They say “a man’s selection reveals his mind. [...] I therefore diligently sought peerless modes of speech, a variety of concepts, gems of wisdom, and many kinds of belles-lettres, anecdotes, and proverbs; then I put together (*qarantu*) each with its own kind and made a separate chapter of it, so that anyone seeking something may find it in its place in the book (*li-yastadillu l-ṭālib ʿalā mawḍiʿihi fī l-kitāb*), next to its kind in every chapter.¹⁸

¹⁷ Usually the Arabic term *allaftu* highlights the synthetic process of combining, whereas *ṣannaftu* rather emphasizes the analytical process of separating into categories and differentiating (cf. Ghersetti, *A Pre-Modern Anthologist at Work*, 23-25). Ibn ʿAbdrabbih, however, is not very consistent in his terminology, he seems to use both terms as synonyms.

¹⁸ Ibn ʿAbdrabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-Farīd*, 16–17; *The Unique Necklace*, 2.

Regarding the architecture of his thematic arrangement, he explains to the reader, as mentioned at the beginning of this study:

I have entitled it the Book (of the Necklace) because of the varied gems of speech it contains, which are finely threaded together and beautifully organized (*li-diqqat al-silk wa-ḥusn al-nizām*). I divided it (*jaza'tuhu*) into twenty-five books, each of which has two parts,¹⁹ making a total of fifty parts in twenty-five books. Each book of them has the name of one of the jewels of the necklace.²⁰

He then enumerates the twenty-five books in a list of chapter headings.²¹

The twenty-five monographic *kutub* cover a broad selection of subjects and are ordered according to a decreasing hierarchy of importance or *descensus* (starting with serious matters such as politics and war, and ending with humorous, light anecdotes). Within the book-chapters, the *'Iqd* features the typical molecular structure of *adab* collections, organized as a large string of quotations that consists of short, narrative, poetic, and gnomic units that serve as illustrations of the chapter's main theme. As is typical in Arabic compilations, Ibn 'Abdrabbih did not order the quoted units in author-blocks, as is the case, for example, in the Byzantine Excerpta,²² but rather following a hierarchy of importance (typically Qur'ān, prophetic hadith and the beginnings of Islam).

The List—A Table of Contents?

What are the functions of this list? Firstly, the list of book-chapters and subjects in the introduction explains the title and illustrates the metaphor of the well-ordered, balanced,

¹⁹ This additional subdivision into further two subchapters (*juz'ān*) was not relevant in the transmission history and is scarcely reflected in the manuscripts; cf. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 28 and his survey on the chapters 29-32.

²⁰ Ibn 'Abdrabbih, *al-'Iqd al-Farīd*, 18.

²¹ Ibn 'Abdrabbih, *al-'Iqd al-Farīd*, 18–19; *The Unique Necklace*, 3-4. For the chapter headings, see the appendix.

²² See Rafiyenko's contribution to this Special Issue.

and aesthetic necklace of precious jewels and topics. Secondly, it works as a comprehensive list that establishes a connection between the items enumerated and conveys the idea of exhaustiveness.²³ Thirdly, it also functions as summary and preview of the contents of the work in abbreviated form, following the order of the text. Therefore, the list can be used at the same time as expository and as navigating tool for the reader, i.e., as table of contents (henceforth ToC). As Johannes Thomann explains in this Special Issue, a mere list of chapter headings at the beginning of an Arabic book could serve as a navigation tool—even without the addition of page numbers – because these headings were also made visible within the book by diverse means (like different inks, different writing style, or blank lines). According to Andrew Riggsby, ToCs basically serve two purposes: first, they give shape to a work, map the field of knowledge and segment a vast and miscellaneous collection of material that needs to be gathered in bunches; and second, they serve as reference tool and are therefore often keyed back to the work (typically pages or section numbers today). As such, they increase the accessibility and retrievability of the material in a work.²⁴

The inclusion of a ToC in the introduction would also fit into the general panorama in Arabic letters in the fourth/tenth century. As Johannes Thomann argues, on the basis of manuscript evidence, there was a trend in this period towards adding a table of contents in scientific literature to increase the ease with which a book could be consulted. It should be added that al-Ya‘qūbī (d. after 292/905) already quotes the ToC of a book as early as *Kalīla wa-Dimna* (in the translation of Ibn al-Muqaffa‘, d. ca. 139/757);²⁵ and the librarian Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380/990 or 388/998) for his part often quotes ToCs of books in his extensive book index. From the sixth/twelfth century onwards, tables of content with extremely sophisticated subdivisions became an indispensable part of the many large encyclopaedias of the age, like those of al-Nuwayrī, al-Qalqashandī.²⁶

²³ On the poetics of lists in pre-modern Arabic literature, see Bray, *Lists and Memory*; also recently Junge, *Doing Things with Lists*. Both authors emphasize how lists establish certain affinities between the items, thereby often “doing things.”

²⁴ Riggsby, *Guides to the Wor(l)d*, 88-90.

²⁵ Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Ta‘rīkh*, I, 197-199.

²⁶ Van Berkel, *Opening up a World of Knowledge*, 366-373, particularly 372-373.

It is not certain if the list formed part of the original text of the *'Iqd*, since most manuscripts are late,²⁷ the introduction also functions without it, and the list is not followed by a final praise element, as is usual.²⁸ As emphasized by Aude Doody and Andrew Riggsby, reading practices and scholarly methods change in the course of time, depending on medium and material used.²⁹ A table of contents is sometimes added later, in a period when it was deemed necessary or desirable to allow the reader to skip more or less directly to a specific part of a work to learn about a chosen topic.³⁰ It is therefore possible that the list in the *'Iqd* was added later by a copyist-editor based on the actual titles of the book-chapters that follow.

However, besides the general trend mentioned above, two arguments support the hypothesis that the list was already part of the original text or at least that it was included quite early. First, an exposition of the thematic organization had become part of the conventional introduction by the fourth/tenth century and served to give to the reader a preview of the work, indicating the method and agenda, and demonstrating the compositional skill of the author-compiler.³¹ Without the list, this exposition would have lacked something important. Ibn Qutayba (279/889), for instance, provides a half-page summary of each of the following ten book-chapters in the introduction of the *'Uyūn al-*

²⁷ For a survey on the manuscript situation, see Brockelmann, *GAL*, I, 161; S. I, 250 (around twenty manuscripts mentioned); Werkmeister (*Quellenuntersuchungen*, 38) mentions the existence of around hundred manuscripts.

²⁸ For the formal elements of introductions, see Freimark, *Das Vorwort*, 22-28, particularly 28.

²⁹ For instance, if the work was kept in separate script rolls (as is the case in papyri), the beginning of each section would be the place to locate a ToC/introduction and this would be sufficient to help navigate the reader; within the roll, however, only linear reading is possible. Codices function very differently; it is much easier to jump to different sections. The introduction of page numbers in print also added considerably to the ease with which a book could be used in this way.

³⁰ Doody, *Finding Facts*; Riggsby, *Guides to the Wor(l)d*.

³¹ Freimark, *Das Vorwort*, 22-28.

akhbār, an *adab* compilation that is considered as the model of the *ʿIqd*.³² Al-Masʿūdī (d.345/956) also includes a long and detailed list of the chapters in his preface to the *Murūj al-Dhahab*.³³ Second, the indirect transmission shows that the table of contents in the *ʿIqd* was already known in the present form in the early seventh/thirteenth century: The librarian and book-entrepreneur Yāqūt al-Rūmī (d. 626/1229) quotes the complete ToC in the *Irshād*, his huge biographical dictionary, within his entry on Ibn ʿAbdrabbih.³⁴ Yāqūt states that he personally held the *ijāza* (authorization for the transmission) of the *ʿIqd* via Ibn Diḥya (d. 633/1235), a famous Andalusian scholar from Valencia who had ended his days in Syria and Egypt. Yāqūt quotes the *ijāza* in detail—the chain of seven transmitters ends with Ibn ʿAbdrabbih himself—and then proceeds to quote verbatim the table of contents of the *ʿIqd*, which coincides almost in every detail with the versions that we find in the *textus receptus* of the standard 1940 edition of the *ʿIqd* by Aḥmad Amīn.³⁵

However, Jibrāʿil Jabbūr remarks in his study of the *ʿIqd* that several of the Egyptian manuscripts do not completely follow the division of book-chapters (and particularly of *ajzāʾ*) announced in the preface; this shows that the correlation between the ToC in the beginning and the actual copy must be investigated on the basis of a broader selection of manuscripts.³⁶ It is also important to consider that ToCs might sometimes have circulated independently from the corresponding work, for instance as part of biographies and later integrated into compilations which were further reused.

Irrespective of whether the list was part of the original or not, it seems that the handy arrangement and brevity of the chapter headings favoured the use of this list as ToC. As a comparison, in the introduction of *ʿUyūn al-Akḥbār* mentioned above, Ibn Qutayba lists

³² For this introduction, cf. Freimark, *das Vorwort*, 81–82.

³³ Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, I, 28-38.

³⁴ Yāqūt b. ʿAbdallāh al-Rūmī, *Irshād al-arīb*, II, 67–83.

³⁵ The order of the jewels is the same, but in the ToC by al-Yāqūt the witty anecdotes of position 25 and the “natural dispositions” of position 23 are reversed (see the appendix). The chain of transmitters quoted by Yāqūt is the following: Ibn Diḥya < Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq b. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Thawba al-ʿAbdī < Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Maʿmar < Abū Bakr b. Hishām al-Muṣḥafī < his father < Zakariyāʾ b. Bakr b. al-Ashbaḥ < Ibn ʿAbdrabbih.

³⁶ Jabbūr, *Ibn ʿAbdrabbih wa-ʿIqduhu*, 32.

the ten chapter-books, but also adds to each title a half-page passage explaining its content. Thus, the list is not easily converted into a ToC, since it is not a mere list of chapter headings, but a series of summaries. It is also to be said that although Ibn Qutayba divided his work in a system of chapters that roughly follows a similar hierarchical order as the *ʿIqd* (i.e., the *kitāb al-sultān* is at the beginning), the systematicity of his organisation is not comparable to that of the *ʿIqd*, and the chapters do not connect in such a beautiful metaphor like the “Necklace.” The *ʿUyūn* is also significantly shorter than the *ʿIqd*, so it was probably less pressing that its list could function as a tool of navigation.

A brief glimpse at a small selection of manuscripts of the *ʿIqd* from Istanbul and Paris confirms the list’s occasional use as ToC, but also shows the diversity in the copyists’ treatment. Sometimes, the copyist chose to arrange the list in a layout that corresponds to the usual layout of ToCs, as in Fazilahmed Ps 1339, p. 3/4 (dated 946/1536), i.e., with a highlighted list arranged in a column, and with extended end letters. Others even inserted the corresponding book number over the extended *bāʾ* of *kitāb* (thus partly keying the headings with the sections, though these might be later additions by readers), as in Ayasofya 4139, 3v. and 4r. (undated). Others, in contrast, preferred to keep the list within the main text, just marking the titles with a different ink, or in bold, as in Nuruosmaniye 4119, 1v. and 2r., or even without highlighting the titles, such as the copyist of the manuscript in the Bibliotheque National (Arabe 3287, dated 1835, 1v and 2r). It is also worth noting that the number of volumes of each copy varies and will have affected both the usefulness of a ToC and the way the book was read. For instance, the manuscript Ayasofya 4139-4144, almost complete, divides the *ʿIqd* into eight volumes; Fazilahmed 1339-40 into three; and Nuruosmaniyye 4119 in only one volume. Apparently, the original text allowed many options, and the reasons why a copyist chose a certain layout, transforming the list into a ToC must be examined on a case by case basis.³⁷

The reception history of the *ʿIqd* suggests that the systematic organization of the material in the *ʿIqd*—although it did not reach the sophistication of Mamluk

³⁷ There seems to be no clear correspondence between the twenty-five book chapters and the division into volumes, unlike the thematic collections of the *Excerpta*, where each thematic collection was conceived as a single manuscript volume of 200 folios (cf. Rafiyenko’s contribution to this Special Issue).

encyclopaedias—was attractive to readers and became one of the keys of its success. Ibn al-Faraḍī (d. 403/1013), Ibn ‘Abdrabbih’s first known biographer, already highlights that the people appreciated the “systematic composition” (*taṣnīfihi*) of his book.³⁸ Al-Ḥumaydī (d. 488/1095), a much-quoted anthologist of Andalusian letters, also mentions that Ibn ‘Abdrabbih’s main oeuvre was a “large book called the Book of the *‘Iqd* about *akhbār* which he divided into sections according to their content (*‘alā ma‘ānin*), giving them the names of the [pearls] of a necklace.”³⁹ Al-Faṭḥ b. Khaqān (d. 528/1134), an Andalusian anthologist, tells that Ibn ‘Abdrabbih “has a famous composition (*ta’līf*) that he called *‘al-‘Iqd* and was subdivided into chapters.”⁴⁰ The systematic division also facilitated the quotation of whole sections in other encyclopaedias and collections, like Ibn ‘Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1231) and al-Nuwayrī (d.733/1333), who extracted whole book-chapters.⁴¹ And al-Ibshīhī (ca. 1388-1466) mentions explicitly the *‘Iqd* in his introduction as a model for his *Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaṭraf*, one of the most successful encyclopaedias in Arabic literature by now, though his own thematic order is different.⁴²

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the idea of a systematic classification of material subdivided into chapters and organized according to subject matter—the *taṣnīf*—started to be used in other branches of knowledge already in the middle of the second/eighth century, i.e., the *muṣannafāt* in *ḥadīth*; Gregor Schoeler even speaks of a “*taṣnīf* movement.”⁴³ However, it takes a while until we find analogous structures in *adab* texts. The works by al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868), for instance, are well known for their digressive style and their chaotic and erratic thematic arrangement of topics. It is almost impossible to retrieve specific information from one of his books without reading the whole text, and even the headings—added later by copyists and editors—are not helpful to locate a topic. Ibn Qutayba was probably the first author-compiler who arranged his *adab* material in a more systematic

³⁸ Ibn al-Faraḍī, *Kitāb ta’rīkh ‘ulamā’ al-Andalus*, VIII, 37 n. 118.

³⁹ Ḥumaydī, *Jadhwat al-muqtabis*, 94.

⁴⁰ Faṭḥ b. Khaqān, *Maṭmaḥ al-anfus*, 270.

⁴¹ Ibn al-Athīr, for instance, inserted book 17 of the *‘Iqd* on *ayyām al-‘arab* in his *al-Kāmil*(f. Toral-Niehoff, *Talking about Arab Origins*, 63-64); al-Nuwayrī did the same in his book V.

⁴² Marzolph, *Medieval Knowledge*.

⁴³ See Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam*, 68–84 about the “*taṣnīf* movement.”

way, and maybe this systematicity derives from his agenda of merging *adab* and *sunna*. He might have been inspired by the trend towards *muṣannafāt* in *ḥadīth*, and it would be interesting to investigate deeper the impact of cross-pollinations between the polygraph Ibn Qutayba's different fields of expertise on his concept of book.⁴⁴ If we suppose that the systematic structuring of a large text into thematic segments with headings, as to be found in Ibn Qutayba's *ʿUyūn*, was a first step towards listing these headings at the beginning of a book as an early ToC (as in the *ʿIqd*), Ibn Qutayba's understanding of *taṣnīf* could be relevant for the history of ToCs in Arabic literature.

Anyway, it can be noted that the systematic organization of material is a necessary condition for the development of a table of contents, in that it needs material that is gathered in clusters and which can be converted into chapters.

Summary and Further Perspectives

In sum, the list in the *ʿIqd* most probably illustrates a transitional stage in the history of the ToC in Arabic literature, from an exposition of the chapters in the main text of the introduction (like in the case of Ibn Qutayba) towards a veritable ToC as navigation tool. My hypothesis is that the list was originally intended by the author as a strategy to shape and segment the variegated topics of the work, and to illustrate the metaphor of the necklace to the reader. Its form, however, made it easily transformable into a ToC, and probably copyists soon turned it into a tool to locate the chapters within this large work, increasing its accessibility and enabling non-linear reading. However, the size, shape, worth and function of the respective manuscript copies are important factors to be considered when evaluating the reasons why a certain copyist chose to transform the list into a ToC.

Another point that needs more investigation on a broader basis is the hypothesis of a connectedness between the trend towards *taṣnīf* in *adab*, as evidenced by Ibn Qutayba and Ibn ʿAbdrabbih, and the development of a table of contents in this field.

⁴⁴ See Lecomte, *Ibn Qutayba*, 421-477 for his project of merging *sunna* and *adab*. Ibn Qutayba was one of the most prolific authors of his time and has composed compilatory handbooks on great variety of topics.

Given the extraordinary rich manuscript situation of the *ʿIqd*—we count more than hundred manuscripts besides numerous abridgements—all the ToCs in these copies need to be investigated and evaluated to reconstruct meaningful patterns. What can be said at present is that the corpus offers a unique opportunity to reconstruct the history of ToCs in Arabic literature and thus to shed light into the history of philological practices in Arab book-culture.

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Appendix: Chapter List (Ibn 'Abdrabbih, 18–19; *The Unique Necklace*, 3-4)

1. The Book of the Pearl on the ruler / government (*kitāb al-lu'lu'a fī l-sultān*)
2. The Book of the Nonpareil Jewel on wars and how to deal with them (*kitāb al-farīda fī l-ḥurūb wa-madār amrihā*)
3. The Book of the Chrysolite on generous men and liberal givers (*kitāb al-zabarjada fī l-ajwād wa-l-aṣfād*)
4. The Book of the Nacre on delegations (*kitāb al-jumāna fī l-wufūd*)
5. The Book of the Coral on addressing kings (*kitāb al-marjāna fī mukhāṭibat al-mulūk*)
6. The Book of the Ruby on learning and adab (*kitāb al-yaqūta fī l-'ilm wa-l-adab*)
7. The Book of the Gem on proverbs (*kitāb al-jawhara fī l-amthāl*)
8. The Book of the Emerald on sermons and asceticism (*kitāb al-zumurruda fī l-mawā'iz wa l-zuhd*)
9. The book of the Mother-of Pearl on women mourners, condolences, and elegies (*kitāb al-durra fī l-ta'āzī wa-l-marāthī*)
10. The Book of the Unique Jewel on genealogy and the virtues of the Arabs (*kitāb al-yatīma fī l-nasab wa-faḍā'il al-'arab*)
11. The Book of the Adorable Jewel on the speech of the Bedouin Arabs (*kitāb al-masjada fī kalām al-a'rāb*)
12. The Book of the Flanking Jewel on responses (*kitāb al-mujannaba fī l-ajwiba*)
13. The Book of the Middle Jewel on orations (*kitāb al-wāsiṭa fī khuṭab*)
14. The Book of the Second Flanking Level on signatures, sections, opening formulae and stories of secretaries (*kitāb al-mujannaba al-thāniya fī tawqī'āt wa-l-fuṣūl wa-l-ṣudūr wa-akhbār al-kataba*)
15. The book of the Second Adorable Jewel on caliphs, their histories, and battles (*kitāb al-masjada al-thāniya fī l-khulafā' wa-tawārīkh wa-ayyāmihim*)
16. The book of the second unique jewel on reports about Ziyād, al-Ḥajjāj, the Ṭālibīs and the Barmakis (*kitāb al-yatīma al-thāniya fī akhbār Ziyād wa-l-Ḥajjāj wa-l-Ṭālibiyyīn wa-l-Barāmika*)

17. The Book of the Second Mother of Pearls on the battle days of the Arabs (*kitāb al-durra al-thāniya fī ayyām al-‘arab wa-waqā’ihim*)
18. The Book of the Second Emerald on the merits of poetry, its meters, and scansion (*kitāb al-zumurruda al-thāniya fī faḍā’il al-shi’r wa-maqāṭi’ihi wa-makhārijihī*)
19. The book of the Second Gem on prosody, rhymes, and metrical irregularities (*kitāb al-jawhara al-thāniya fī a’ārīḍ al-shi’r wa-‘ilal al-qawāfi*)
20. The Book of the Second Ruby on the art of song and people’s disagreement on it (*kitāb al-yāqūta al-thāniya fī ‘ilm al-alḥān wa-khtilāf al-nās fih*)
21. The Book of the Second Coral on women and their attributes (*kitāb al-marjāna al-thāniya fī l-nisā’ wa-ṣifātihinna*)
22. The Book of the Second Nacre on pretenders of prophecy, lunatics, misers and parasites (*kitāb al-jumāna al-thāniya fī l-mutannabi’in wa-l-marūrīn wa-l-bukhalā’ wa-l-ṭufayliyyīn*)
23. The Book of the Second Chrysolite on demonstrating the natural dispositions of humans, other animals, and the contention for precedence among regions (*kitāb al-zabarjada al-thāniya fī bayān ṭabā’i’ al-insān wa-sā’ir al-ḥayawān wa-faḍā’il al-buldān*)
24. The book of the Second Nonpareil Jewel on food and drink (*kitāb al-farīda al-thāniya fī l-ṭa’ām wa-l-sharāb*)
25. The book of the second Pearl on tidbits, gifts, jokes and witty anecdotes (*kitāb al-lu’lu’ā al-thāniya fī l-nuṭaf wa-l-fukāhāt wa-l-hidāyā wa-l-mulaḥ*)