Writing for the Caliphate:
The Unique Necklace by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih*

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Abstract

This study undertakes a political reading of the ʿIqd al-farīd by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih (246/860-328/940). It proposes to identify this adab *encyclopaedia, composed in Cordova as a "caliphal" composition, by interpreting its conceptual agenda and compositional structure against the background of (neo-) Umayyad caliphal ideology as reconstructed by Janina Safran and Gabriel Martinez-Gros. It reads the text as "imperialistic" in its claim to represent Umayyad leadership, as unique and universal, against that of its contemporary rivals, the Abbasids and Fatimids. The Umayyads in al-Andalus suffered from a peculiarly precarious legitimacy, since, in contrast to the Abbasids and Fatimids, they could not refer to a kinship link to the Prophet. Their territory was also situated far outside the central lands of Islam and did not dominate the Holy Sites in the Ḥijāz (required for a caliph), which was a source of embarrassment. Therefore, there was a particularly strong need for a consistent ideology to compensate for this weakness. The study concentrates on three arguments. First, that the ʿIqd al-Farīd was written by a man of the Umayyad regime under the tutelage of the caliph; second, that the ʿIqd reflects a cultural program that aimed at educating Cordovan elites according to cultural models set forth by caliphal Baghdad; and third, that, as an encyclopaedia, it reflects an inclusive, globalizing, culturally imperialistic program that matched the contemporaneous caliphal universal aspirations of the Umayyad regime.*

In the year 316/929, the Umayyad emir ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, who had been ruling in al-Andalus since 300/912 as successor to his grandfather ʿAbdallāh (275/888–300/912), ended the long period of the Umayyad emirate in Cordoba that had begun in 136/754.[1] He achieved this through a dramatic course of action: by assuming the title of Commander of the Faithful (*amīr al-muʾminīn*) and then asserting the prerogatives of *khuṭba* and *sikka*. Thus he initiated the short but splendid era of the Second Umayyad caliphate that lasted

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1. M. Fierro, "Sobre la adopción del título califal por ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III," *Sharq Al-Andalus* 6 (1989), 33-42.

until 422/1031.[2] The period of Umayyad al-Andalus not only signified an important moment in Islamic history, but was also a time of extraordinary cultural splendour that would later be celebrated as a Golden Age comparable to the mythical Baghdad of the Abbasids and memorialized as a period of vivid cultural and intellectual activity that produced remarkable achievements in literature, art, and science, many of which would gain status as timeless classics of Arabic culture.

One of the many masterpieces produced in caliphal Cordoba is the multivolume *Unique Necklace* (*al-ʿIqd al-Farīd*) by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih (246–328/860–940), a popular literary compendium that exists in more than 100 manuscripts and was frequently quoted, excerpted and summarized.[3] The enthusiastic *exordium* in the Beirut reprint of the standard Cairo edition of 1940-53, for instance, clearly expresses the high esteem in which the book is held in Arab culture to date.[4] It is regrettable that we still lack profound studies of this extremely rich collection that, like many other *adab* anthologies, has been regularly used as a material quarry for the study of *akhbār*, but almost never evaluated as a composition in its own right.[5] This neglect is also particularly unfortunate since the *ʿIqd* stands out as the most extended and sophisticated literary text composed before the final collapse of the Umayyad regime in 422/1031, which allows it to capture the self-perception of intellectual elites during the triumphant phase of the caliphal age without the distortion of nostalgia and decadence that we find in most of our sources.[6]

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2. For this denomination, used to make a distinction from the "First" Umayyad Caliphate in Damascus, cf. J. M. Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate: The Articulation of Caliphal Legitimacy in al-Andalus* (Cambridge, M. 2000). The Umayyads had ruled as emirs since 138/754 on the Iberian Peninsula and had never recognized the legitimacy of the Abbasid caliphate in the East; however, they never asserted their own counterclaim until then.

3. For a state of research on the *ʿIqd*, J. Haremska, "Ibn Abd Rabbih," in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, vol. 1, ed. J. Lirola Delgado, Enciclopedia de la cultura Andalusí 1 (Almería, 2009), 620–9; R. Arié, "Un lettré hispano-musulman du Haut Moyen Age: Ibn Abd Rabbih. État des recherches," in *Homenaje a José M. Fórneas*, (Granada 1994), I, 65–72; J. Veglison Elías de Molins, *El collar único, de Ibn Abd Rabbihi* (Madrid: Sintesis, 2007); W. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd des Andalusiers Ibn ʿAbdrabbih: (246/860-328/949): ein Beitrag zur arabischen Literaturgeschichte* (Berlin: K. Schwarz, 1983); HATA, "Historia de los Autores y Transmisores Andalusíes (Hata)," http://kohepocu.cchs.csic.es/.

4. S. pp. *alif-yāʾ* by ʿUmar Tudmīrī in IbnʿAbd Rabbih, *Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, 7, + Index, ed. A. Amīn and I. al-Abyārī (Bayrūt, 1990; repr. Ed. 1940-53, Cairo).

5. The only monograph on the *ʿIqd* to date is J. Veglison Elías de Molins, *El collar único, de Ibn Abd Rabbihi*, but is rather a short summary of previous studies. The author of this article is preparing a monograph on the *ʿIqd*. It should be said that in the last several years, there have been several published studies that study compendia as compositions in their own right, such as the very inspiring by H. Kilpatrick, *Making the Great Book of Songs: Compilation and the Author's Craft in Abū l-faraj al-Iṣbahānī's Kitāb al-Aghānī* (London, 2003). For the problems of authorship in pre-Modern Arabic literature cf. the studies collected in L. Behzadi & J. Hämeen Anttila (eds), *Concepts of authorship in Pre-Modern Arabic Texts* (Bamberg, 2015).

6. For this perspective of later sources that look at the caliphate as a symbol and reference of past unity in al-Andalus cf. G. Martinez-Gros, *L'idéologie omeyyade: la contruction de la légitimité du Califat de Cordoue (xᵉ-xɪᵉ siècles)* (Madrid, 1992), 163-328 and 185-195; cf. also J. Safran, *The second Umayyad Caliphate: The articulation of caliphal legitimacy in al-Andalus* (Cambridge, M. 2000), 185-195.

The following study proposes to undertake a political reading of this text that *prima facie* presents itself as a non-political, literary compendium.[7] It should be mentioned that, nevertheless, certain passages do convey a more explicit political message. In a previous study, I have already discussed the historical sections found in book 15 in the *ʿIqd,* "The Book of the Second Adorable Jewel on Caliphs, their Histories, and Battles." There I have shown that Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih organized his history as biographies of an uninterrupted chain of legitimate rulers (*khulafāʾ*) that linked the Prophet, via the eastern Umayyads, with the Umayyads in al-Andalus, ending with ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Nāṣir. As already emphasized by Janina Safran, this "chain of authority" (connected by genealogy and legitimate delegation) was the main argument the Umayyads in al-Andalus used to support their claim to universal rule.[8] From a more general perspective, the first book in the *ʿIqd*, dealing with *sulṭān,* gives us an idea of Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih's idea of governance and good rule, which coincides with the *adab*-standards of the time: political authority is part of the divine order and is bestowed by God; and good advice by adequate counsellors is essential.[9] Finally, the text also presents interesting information regarding Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih's understanding of the Umayyad caliphate in his *urjūza* on the military campaigns of caliph ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Nāṣir, studied by James T. Monroe.[10]

This article approaches the question from a different angle. It proposes to read this *adab* text as a *caliphal* composition by interpreting its conceptual agenda and compositional structure against the background of the (neo-)Umayyad caliphal ideology as reconstructed by Janina Safran and Gabriel Martinez-Gros, and assumed to be basically imperialistic in its claim to be the unique and universal leadership against its contemporary rivals, the Abbasids and the Fatimids.[11] As both scholars point out, the Umayyads in al-Andalus suffered from a peculiarly precarious legitimacy, since, in contrast to the Abbasids and Fatimids, they could not refer to their parentage with the Prophet. In addition, the fact that their territory was situated far outside the central lands of Islam and did not dominate the

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7. The task involves the difficulty of undertaking the political reading of a literary text, i.e. of "politicising the aesthetic" which is indeed a methodological challenge. Julia Bray has rightly observed that it is not possible to read the *ʿIqd* as a plain piece of political propaganda: J. Bray, "ʿAbbasid Myth and the Human Act: Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih and Others," in *On Fiction and Adab in Medieval Arabic Literature*, ed. P. F. Kennedy, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 1–54.

8. I. Toral-Niehoff, "History in Adab Context: "The Book on Caliphal Histories" by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih (246/860–328/940)," *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 2, no. 1 (2015), 79; for the "chain" Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate*, 32.

9. Cf. I. Toral-Niehoff "The 'Book of the Pearl of the Ruler' in the Unique Necklace by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih: Preliminary Remarks," In *Global Medieval: Mirrors for Princes Reconsidered*, edited by R. Forster and N. Yavari (Boston, Mass., 2015), 134–50.

10. J. T. Monroe, "The Historical Arjuza of Ibn Abd Rabbih, a Tenth Century Hispano-Arabic Epic Poem," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 91 (1971), 67-95.

11. Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate* and Martinez-Gros, *L'idéologie omeyyade.* I do not follow the far-reaching thesis of Martinez-Gros about an "esoteric" aspect of this ideology; however, his book underlines rightly the importance of studying the legitimizing discourse for the Second Umayyads because of its precariousness. It is regrettable that he did not study the *ʿIqd* from this perspective in his book.

Holy Sites in the Ḥijāz (as was required for a caliph) was embarrassing.[12] Therefore, we must suppose that they felt an even greater need to develop a convincing and coherent caliphal ideology to compensate for this weakness.

To this end, the following study concentrates on three arguments. First, that the text was written by a man of the regime, i.e. by a *caliphal* man, in the sense that he was a representative for the cultural elites of his day who stood close to the caliph; from this, we can presume that his oeuvre reflects the caliphal perspective. It is also of importance that the Umayyad regime was very concentrated on Cordoba, a city that emerges in our sources as practically the sole focus of political and cultural life in al-Andalus in the early fourth/ tenth century. The multifocal and variegated panorama of potential sponsors and competing centers that we find in the contemporaneous East, which provided the opportunity for a certain independence among intellectuals and litterateurs,[13] is not to be found in al-Andalus in this period. For this reason, I regard it as quite unlikely that a poet of limited economic resources, as was the case for Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, would have been able to compose an oeuvre of such proportions without the endorsement of the caliph.

Second, I will argue that the *ʿIqd* reflects a cultural program that aimed at educating the Cordovan elites and transforming them into veritable *caliphal* men per cultural models already establishd by Baghdad. The court culture in Baghdad had already been the model throughout the first stages of the "orientalization" of al-Andalus in the third/ninth century, during the advent of the noteworthy singer al-Ziryāb (d. 243/857) and it continued to be the standard in the tenth[14].

The third argument is very much connected with the second one. After showing that the *ʿIqd* is a very encyclopaedic *adab* work (the *ʿIqd* is a case in point exemplifying that the phenomena of encyclopaedism and *adab* often appear in conjunction), I will put forth the thesis that this encyclopaedism makes the *ʿIqd* very *caliphal* since it reflects an inclusive, globalizing, imperialistic cultural program that matched the contemporaneous *caliphal* universal aspirations of the Umayyad regime.

The *ʿIqd*: Written by a *Caliphal* Man

First, the *caliphal* dimension of the *ʿIqd* is suggested by the biographical data: Abū ʿUmar Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih (246/860–328/940), though not a politician, was in close personal proximity to the ruling elite surrounding the caliph and, not being very wealthy, he depended on their favor and economic support. The clear indications are that he was a regular member of the courtly circles in Umayyad Cordoba, to which he likely

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12. Cf. the locus *classicus* "He who controls the two sanctuaries Mecca and Medina and leads the pilgrimage thus merits the caliphate" in, e.g., Yaʿqūbī (d. 284/897), *Taʾrīkh*, II, 321. For the spatial aspects in the *ʿIqd*, see Toral-Niehoff, "History in Adab Context," 73.

13. L. Osti, "Culture, Education and the Court," in *Crisis and Continuity at the Abbasid Court, Formal and Informal Politics in the Caliphate of al-Muqtadir (295–320/908–932)*, ed. by M. van Berkel, N. M. El Cheikh, H. Kennedy and L. Osti (Leiden, 2013), 187-214.

14. J. Ramírez del Río, *La orientalización de al-Andalus: Los días de los árabes en la península ibérica* (Sevilla, 2002).

belonged from the times of emir Muḥammad (reg. 238/852273/886) until his death under the rule of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān in 328/940,[15] functioning mainly as court poet. He came from a local family whose members had been clients (*mawālī*) of the Umayyads since the rule of emir Hishām I (reg. 172/788–180/796).[16] The Umayyad clients formed a privileged group, whose support was essential for the Umayyad regime, however, Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih seems to have been regarded as being of a lower status,[17] probably because he did not belong to the prestigious *mawālī* of Eastern stock (i.e. descendants of those *mawālī* who had immigrated in earliest times from the East, mainly from Syria[18]); in fact he was a local *mawlā*. Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih belonged to a class of citizens on the inferior rung of the social ladder who sought the patronage of those above them: this is suggested by the fact that he addressed several of his panegyrics to two prestigious members of the elite *buyutāt* (large aristocratic houses), namely to the commander Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī ʿAbdāʾ[19] and the minister ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Zajjālī,[20] which indicates that the precariously employed court poet was seeking to gain access to the inner circles.[21] We do not know if he ever held an official position in the court administration as a *kātib* or some other capacity.[22] After a period spent outside Cordoba during the fitna at the end of the 3rd/9th century, he returned to the Umayyad court of Cordoba around 300/912, where he spent the last decades of his life as court poet of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Nāṣir, whom he praised in numerous poems, the most famous being a long *urjūza* celebrating military campaigns undertaken at the beginning of his rule.[23] It is likely that the cumbersome collection and composition of the *ʿIqd* took place during this tranquil period in his life, under the tutelage of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Nāṣir. However, although it is highly probable, we do not know if the caliph officially sponsored

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15. Cf. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd des Andalusiers Ibn ʿAbdrabbih*, 18–19.

16. Ibn-al-Faraḍī, *Kitāb taʾrīḫ ʿulamāʾ al-Andalus,* ed. F. Codera (Matriti, 1892), no. 118.

17. Actually, he and his family do not appear among the *buyutāt* listed by Mohamed Méouak in his prosopographical study of the elites in Umayyad Cordoba: M. Méouak, *Pouvoir souverain, administration centrale et élites politiques dans l'Espagne umayyade: (IIe-IVe/VIIIe-Xe siècles)* (Helsinki, 1999). His ancestor is mentioned in M. Fierro, "Los *mawālī* de ʿAbd al-Raḥmān I," *Al-Qantara* XX (1999), 65-98, number 49.

18. i.e. what M. Méouak calls "Le noyau dur du personnel politique: Les *buyūtāt* d'origine "arabo-orientale"/ *mawlā*," *Pouvoir souverain,* 74–162.

19. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd des Andalusiers Ibn ʿAbdrabbih*, 19. For this prestigious family, cf. Méouak, *Pouvoir souverain,* 77–79. For Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, the most famous member of the family, cf. p. 88-91. He was in charge of the Cordovan army under emir ʿAbdallāh and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III. He died in 303/917.

20. Méouak, *Pouvoir souverain*, 177. He was one of the secretaries of emir ʿAbdallāh and continued holding diverse administrative positions under ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III. Died in 301/914.

21. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd des Andalusiers Ibn ʿAbdrabbih*, 19.

22. Under the turbulent rule of emir ʿAbdallāh (275/888300/912) he left Cordoba and searched for the protection of the rebellious Ibn Ḥajjāj in Seville, a semi-independent chiefdom under the rule of one of the leading Sevillian families, the Banū Hajjāj: Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd des Andalusiers Ibn ʿAbdrabbih*, 20. This episode not only indicates a certain alienation from the emiral court, but also the fragility of his position.

23. Monroe, "The Historical Arjuza of Ibn Abd Rabbih." The *urjūza* is quoted in the *ʿIqd* in the 15th book.

the time-consuming composition of the *ʿIqd*, as the text does not contain a formal dedication to the caliph. It is important to note, however, that formal dedications within prefaces were not yet a convention of the genre at the time, so one would not necessarily have expected to find one.[24]

A very interesting point in Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih's biography is that he never left al-Andalus[25] to undertake pilgrimage and study in the Islamic East as many of his contemporaries did.[26] This means that in order to compose his enormous collection of *adab*, Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih would have had to cull from the copious Iraqi material that was already circulating in Cordoba at the time. In this regard, the *ʿIqd* is an indirect testimony about the quality and quantity of Abbasid material that had reached al-Andalus by then, and which marked the climax of the "Iraqization" of al-Andalus that had begun in the 3rd/9th century.[27] Further, it indicates the astonishing degree of cultural globalization in the Islamicate world of the age, a point that will be addressed later. With regard to this, it is also important to consider Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih's excellent education: Ibn al-Faraḍī mentions in his entry on Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih his three distinguished teachers: Baqī b. Makhlad (d. 276/889), Muḥammad b. Waḍḍāḥ (d. 287/900) and Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Salām al-Khushanī (d. 286/899). The first two were the most celebrated *fuqahāʾ* and *muḥaddithūn* of the period and are credited with being the first to introduce *ʿilm al-hadīth* in al-Andalus, a discipline until then scarcely known in a region where Mālikism and the unsystematic doctrine of *fiqh* had been firmly rooted since the days of Emir al-Ḥakam (reg. 154/770–206/822).[28] The third teacher was a famous scholar who introduced substantial poetry, philology and *adab* material to al-Andalus.[29] A commonality between the three is that they spent long periods of time in the cultural centers of the East before becoming some of the most important disseminators of Abbasid culture, science, and wisdom in al-Andalus.

In summary, since Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih was in close contact with the center of power and dependent on the favor of higher social circles, we must suppose a certain level of political involvement on his part. It is also highly improbable that he could have composed his huge oeuvre without the backing of the Umayyads and especially of the caliph, so we can assume that his oeuvre will most likely reflect the *caliphal* standpoint and ideology.

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24. P. Freimark, *Das Vorwort als literarische Form in der Arabischen Literatur* (Münster, 1967), 109-11.

25. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd des Andalusiers Ibn ʿAbdrabbih*, 22–23; discussing also M. Shafi, "A Description of the Two Sanctuaries of Islam by Ibn Abd Rabbihi," in *A Volume of Oriental Studies presented to Edward G. Browne on his 60th Birthday*, ed. T.W Arnold and R. A. Nicholson (Cambridge, 1922), 416–38, who claims he had done the pilgrimage in Mecca.

26. M. Marín, "La transmisión del saber en al-Andalus (hasta 300/912)," *al-Qantara* 8 (1987), 87-98; L. Molina, "Lugares de destino de los viajeros andalusíes en el *Taʾrij* de Ibn al-Faradi," in *Estudios onomástico-biográficos de al-Andalus, I (1988)*, 585–610.

27. Ramírez del Río, *La orientalización de al-Andalus*

28. M. Fierro, "The Introduction of *hadith* in al-Andalus," *Der Islam* 66, no. 1 (1989), 78–83.

29. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd des Andalusiers Ibn ʿAbdrabbih*, 254–62. L. Molina, "Un árabe entre muladíes: Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Salām al-Jusanī," *EOBA. VI*, 337-351. English transl. in M. Marín (ed.), *The Formation of al-Andalus. Part I: History and Society* (Ashgate, 1998), 115-28.

The Iraqism of the *ʿIqd*

The *ʿIqd* was composed in Umayyad Cordoba by an Andalusi author active in courtly circles, but in contrast to later Andalusi works, which would owe their popularity to their detailed accounts of local culture, the *ʿIqd* did not become famous because it depicted regional color and featured a wealth of local traditions. It might come as a surprise, but there is scarcely any information about al-Andalus in the *ʿIqd.* On the contrary, the *ʿIqd* provides the reader with a well-ordered encyclopaedic sample of the best examples of Arabic literature, poetry, wisdom and ethics that were circulating in late third/ninth century Abbasid Iraq, and which formed the corpus of texts that would become part of the classic canon. The result is such a perfect mimicry of Iraqi *adab* that it is easy to forget that it was not composed in Baghdad, but rather in the remote occidental periphery of the Islamic world.

This peculiarity also explains why the *ʿIqd* was not considered canonical for Arabic culture until much later, and even suggests that it might have contributed significantly to the construction of its literary canon. There is a famous anecdote which is commonly quoted to illustrate the alleged lackluster reception to the *ʿIqd* in the East of the Islamic world,[30] but which does not do justice to its actual achievements, which are evidenced by the wealth of preserved manuscripts and the popularity of the work today. According to the story, when the famous Būyid vizier and man of letters, Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād (326/938–385/995),[31] heard about the *ʿIqd* by the Cordovan Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, he took pains to get a copy, but after reading it reacted in disappointment to the absence of authentic Andalusī material and exclaimed: "This is our merchandise brought back to us! I thought it would contain notices on their country (al-Andalus), but it merely contains notices about our country. We do not need it!"

In my opinion, the anecdote—first mentioned in al-Yāqūt's *Irshād* (d. 626/1229)[32]—was probably constructed later and reflects the attitudes that later generations in the Middle period, who responded with dismay after reading the "Iraqi" *ʿIqd*, held toward Andalusī works. In fact, the *ʿIqd* as a collection seems not to have reached the East until Ayyūbid times, when it was introduced by Ibn Diḥya (d. 633/1235), who transmitted the *ijāza* to Yāqūt, as he himself mentions in his *Irshād,* and it is only from then onwards that we can reliably attest to its reception. Al-Thaʿālibī (d. 420/1029), often mentioned as evidence for the early reception of the *ʿIqd* in the East, was in fact only aware of Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih's poetry and some rather confusing biographical notices, and since he also quotes verses by him not

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30. The anecdote appears e.g. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 38; Veglison, *Collar* 79; Brockelmann, *GALS 1*, 251. Yāqūt seems to be the first to mention the story

31. The anecdote refers to Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbbād. For him see Pellat, Ch. "Ibn ʿAbbād" in *EI²*.

32. Yāqūt, *Irshād*, 2/67: *Hādhihī biḍāʿatunā ruddat ilaynā! Ẓanantu anna hādhā al-kitāba yashtamilu ʿalā shayʾin min akhbāri bilādihim, wa-innamā mushtamilun ʿalā akhbār bilādinā lā ḥājata lanā fīhī! Fa-raddahū.* The anecdote denotes an interesting opposition between the "us" of the Mashriqīs and the "they" of the Maghribīs.

contained in the *ʿIqd*, we must suppose he had access to his *Dīwān*, otherwise unpreserved,[33] rather than to the *ʿIqd*.

This "Iraqism" of the *ʿIqd* has also converted the text into a remarkable source for a study of the transfer of knowledge, and as such has been studied by Walter Werkmeister. He showed that the *ʿIqd* is almost completely culled from Abbasid material that was at the time circulating in scholarly circles as informal draft-books, reflecting a stage in the production of the ordinary book.[34]

Accordingly, the setting of the poetic and prose quotations is almost completely confined to the Eastern part of the Islamic world. With the exception of several historical sections in book 15 that Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih dedicates to the Andalusi Umayyads—probably based on local material, but very difficult to identify—there is scarcely any reference to the Andalusi local context.[35] As has been correctly emphasized by Julia Bray,[36] the anecdotes within the *ʿIqd* are set in the placeless realm of Abbasid myth, namely Hijaz, Iraq and the timeless Jāhiliyya on the Arabian Peninsula. The only materials that can be unmistakably identified as Andalusi are the poetic fragments composed by the author himself, which are spread across the entire collection. It is likely that he thus hoped to frame his oeuvre in a way that put it on par with the metropolitan poetry produced in Iraq so the *ʿIqd* could share in its prestige.

I propose that this peculiar "Iraqism" of the *ʿIqd* is also part of its *caliphal* agenda. As we will see, the *ʿIqd*, with its plethora of Iraqi *adab*, was probably intended as a handbook for the provincial Umayyad court-man of Cordoba that instructed him in how to become a cultivated *adīb* in accordance with the latest metropolitan Abbasid fashion, thus transforming the reader into a *caliphal* man on a par with those living in Baghdad. Despite the well-known political tensions between the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, and the contemporaneous political decadence of the Abbasid caliphate, the *ʿIqd*'s 'Iraqism' shows that Abbasid Baghdad had already established what *caliphal* culture should look like.

The Encyclopaedism of the *ʿIqd*

The *caliphal* dimension of the *ʿIqd* goes even further and is closely related to its character as typically representative of *adab* encyclopaedism. Hillary Kilpatrick, in 1982, classified the *ʿIqd* as an emblematic *adab*-encyclopaedia, thus introducing this textual category as an interpretive framework for several vast, multi-thematic, and miscellaneous works like the *ʿIqd* and *ʿUyūn al-Akhbār* by Ibn Qutayba, and for later collections of almost elephantine

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33. One fourth of his verses are preserved in the *Yatīmat al-Dahr* by al-Thaʿālibī, in the 9th section of the ninth chapter, dedicated to Andalusi and Maghribi poets. The Andalusi material came to al-Thaʿālibī via his friend Abū Saʿd b. Dūst, who had them from al-Walīd b. Bakr al-Faqīh al-Andalusī (d. 392/1002), a travelling scholar that had visited Syria, Iraq, Khorasan and Transoxania and who had transmitted a lot of knowledge from the Maghrib. Cf. B. Orfali, *The Anthologists Art: Abū Manṣūr al-Thaʿālibī and his Yatīmat al-dahr* (Leiden, 2016), 126-128.

34. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen.*, 463-69 and passim. These results of Werkmeister's study became central for the theses of G. Schoeler.

35. The only exception is the historical section, namely book 15, already studied in my study: Toral-Niehoff, "History in Adab Context."

36. J. Bray, "ʿAbbasid Myth and the Human Act."

proportions like the *Nihāya* by al-Nuwayrī. She defined an adab-*encyclopaedia* as: "a work designed to provide the basic knowledge in the domains with which the average cultured man (an *adīb*) may be expected to be acquainted (...) characterized by organization into chapters or books on the different books treated."[37]

The *ʿIqd* can be duly seen as an encyclopedic work: it is a multivolume, *adab*-work with a sophisticated structure, reflecting a very broad cultural program. It is instructive to read in the main introduction how the author himself explicates his highly ambitious, totalizing, cosmopolitan cultural program that clearly fits into an encyclopaedic scheme. His main objective is indeed to order, present, and organize the many pieces or "jewels" of knowledge, wisdom, and *adab* as preserved and accumulated by earlier generations from all cultures and languages (i.e., from all past humankind), and to select from them the very best:[38]

> People of every generation and experts of every nation have spoken about *adab* and have philosophized about branches of learning in every tongue and in every age; and 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 needed summarization and their selections have needed choice-making (...) I have compiled this work and selected its jewels from the choice gems of *adab* and the best picks of eloquence.

The title "The Unique Necklace" is not only ornamental, but points to the text's organizing principle: knowledge is presented as a necklace of twenty precious pearls, and, following this metaphor, each book-title corresponds to the name of a gem or pearl.[39] These twenty-five monographic *kutub* cover a very broad selection of subjects and are ordered according to a hierarchy of importance. Within the books, the *ʿIqd* also features a molecular structure, further developing the metaphor of the jeweled collar. As with many compilations of this type, the structure can be described as a large string of short narrative, poetic, and gnomic units that serve as illustrations of the chapter's main theme. The twenty-five monographic *kutub* or chapters cover various subjects and are ordered according to a decreasing hierarchy of importance.

The wide thematic range impressively evidences the author's broad and encyclopaedic idea of *adab;* and the organization of the material testifies to his efforts to systematize the variegated and then-emerging field of knowledge.[40] However, in contrast to encyclopaedias

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37. H. Kilpatrick, "A Genre in Classical Arabic Lterature: The *Adab* Encyclopaedia," in *Proceedings of the 10th Congress of the Union Européene des Arabisants et Islamisants*, ed. R. Hillenbrand (Edinburgh 1982), 34

38. Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, I,16; trans. I. J. Boullata, *The Unique Necklace* (Reading, UK, 2007), 2.

39. Titles that make use of the metaphor of "collar of jewels" or "pearls" to designate a book (especially anthologies) abound in Arabic literature, the most famous being "The Ring of the Dove," the *Tawq al-ḥamāma* by Ibn Ḥazm. However, these titles are normally only ornamental. Cf. the explanation of the title by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih himself in Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, I,4.

40. Cf. the table of content in the Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, I, 18-19 and the thematic survey in Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd des Andalusiers Ibn ʿAbdrabbih*, 27–43.

that are organized following a systematic and scientific epistemology of knowledge (inspired by Greek models and philosophy, still in *statu nascendi* then in al-Andalus),[41] the *ʿIqd* is arranged in accordance with thematic clusters that follow a descending hierarchy of knowledge (*descensus*).[42] The systematic structure of the *ʿIqd* also made it very manageable, so that later authors like al-Nuwayrī and al-Qalqashandī were able to easily excerpt whole books from the *ʿIqd* for their own works.[43]

The *ʿIqd* reflects a broad curriculum that includes, for example, knowledge of statecraft, the military, diplomacy, courtly etiquette, literature, poetry, history, and diverse witty anecdotes; this suggests that it encompassed the broad base of knowledge that a cultivated member of the courtly elite in Cordoba would be expected to have. This would also explain the rather secular focus, which points to the courtly and humanistic understanding of knowledge typical for *adab* (there are no monographic chapters on religious themes in the *ʿIqd*, although religion is still present as a conceptual reference and through frequent quotations from the hadith and the Quran). This also harmonizes with the notion that the nature of knowledge is universal—as shown by the previous quotation, it is the very essence (*jawhar*) of the perennial, universal wisdom that was accumulated by earlier generations. This is an inclusive concept of wisdom that justifies and even recommends the frequent use of non-Islamic material: thus, we will find many pieces localized in the pre-Islamic *jāhilīya* and in Greek, Iranian, and Indian material[44].

Moreover, the cultural ideal of *adab* as reflected in the *ʿIqd* emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things, since in fact, an *adīb* was supposed to know "a little bit of everything." Thus, we can also say that *adab* is conceptually linked to the concept of encyclopaedism, which has a political dimension. Encyclopaedism, if understood broadly, refers to a cultural practice that aims to encompass all human knowledge in one work, which then serves as a sort of *panorama* or *speculum mundi.* In this larger sense, it is an extended transcultural practice that can be found in diverse scriptural societies, often in the context of Empire and connected to the configuration and consolidation of cultural memory.[45] The totalizing scope, categorizing impulse, and universal perspective further link

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41. H. H. Biesterfeldt, "Medieval Arabic Encyclopedias of Science and Philosophy," in *Islamic Medical and Scientific Tradition*, ed. P. E. Pormann (London, 2011), 48-65 H. H. Biesterfeldt, "Arabisch-islamische Enzyklopädien: Formen und Funktionen," in *Die Enzyklopädie im Wandel vom Hochmittelalter bis zur frühen Neuzeit: Akten des Kolloquiums des Projekts D im Sonderforschungsbereich 231 (29.11.-1.12.1996)*, ed. Ch. Meier-Staubach (München, 2002), 43–84.

42. Ch. Meier-Staubach, ed., *Die Enzyklopädie im Wandel vom Hochmittelalter bis zur frühen Neuzeit: Akten des Kolloquiums des Projekts D im Sonderforschungsbereich 231 (29.11. - 1.12.1996)* (München, 2002).

43. Veglison Elías de Molins, *El collar único, de Ibn Abd Rabbihi*, 80.

44. For this concept of wisdom in Islam, see L. Marlow, "Among Kings and Sages: Greek and Indian Wisdom in an Arabic Mirror for Princes," *Arabica* 60, 1-2 (2013), 1–57 D. Gutas, "The Greek and Persian Background of Early Arabic Encyclopedism," in *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World*, ed. G. Endress and A. Filali-Ansary (Leiden, Boston, 2006), 91–101.

45. P. Binkley, ed., *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts: Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress, Groningen, 1-4 July 1996* (Leiden, New York, 1997); G. Endress and A. Filali-Ansary, eds., *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World* (Leiden, Boston, 2006); J. König and T. Whitmarsh, "Ordering Knowledge (Chapter 1)," in *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire*, ed. J. König and T.

encyclopaedism with imperialism,[46] an inclusive discourse that embraces all of humankind under the umbrella of one dominating culture.

Finally, the idea of preserving the cultural memory of a "we-group" ("our" legacy) is also very present in the *ʿIqd*. However, there is a certain irony in this, since the legacy from which Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih is drawing is not local (there is no reference to any Gothic, Iberian, or local Maghribī/Andalusī knowledge), and he in fact references the standard Abbasid program. So, the "we" he is speaking about is the "we" of Abbasid Iraq, so that "our jāhiliyya" (as used in the book 17 on *ayyām al-ʿArab*) comes to have taken place in the Arabian Peninsula. Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih is thus not preserving, so much as constructing, a new cultural memory for al-Andalus; by this means, he successfully inscribes his homeland onto the realm of Islamic-Arabic culture as it was shaped by Abbasid Iraq in the 2nd/8th -3rd/9th centuries.

The *ʿIqd*: An Encyclopaedia for the Caliphate? Some Proposals

In summary, I propose that the *ʿIqd* stands as a *caliphal* text in many regards and deserves more profound study from this perspective. First, it was composed by a man close to the *caliphal* regime who was probably supported by elite circles; second, it reflects a cultural program aimed at converting the elite Andalusi reader into a *caliphal* man in accordance with pre-set Abbasid models; and third, it conveys a universal, encyclopaedic and humanistic understanding of wisdom that proceeds to subsume precedent knowledge into Islamic *ʿilm* and which is thus conceptually connected to a *caliphal* ideology. From this perspective, the *ʿIqd*'s cultural program reflects an inclusive discourse: it is a literary monument that transmits ideas of global order, completeness, and universal wisdom that is shared by humanity of all ages and cultures. Here, I see a conceptual connection to the imperialistic and integrating goals of the Umayyad caliphal project and its universalizing tendency.

The material basis of this "universalizing" compound of knowledge and *adab*, however, is not actually global. Rather, it draws from the peculiar compound of traditions circulating in Abbasid Iraq, as it were: Arabic-Islamic, Arabic-pre-Islamic, and Biblical lore, as well as Iranian, Indian, and Greek elements. Thus, the *ʿIqd* evidences and summarizes the climax of the great acculturation process in al-Andalus that had been initiated in the 3rd/9th century, and which signified an enormous transfer of knowledge from the Mashriq to the Maghrib, coupled with an appropriation of Abbasid literary culture, which resulted in "orientalising" al-Andalus and inscribing it into the world of Islam. Therefore, it is also fascinating evidence of the Arabo-Islamic globalization process of the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries.

The *ʿIqd* embodies a cultural programme that simultaneously follows a dynamic of implementation (transferring Abbasid culture into Umayyad al-Andalus), and of inclusion

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Whitmarsh (Cambridge, 2007), 3–39; A. Álvar Ezquerra, ed., *Las enciclopedias en España antes de l'Encyclopédie* (Madrid, 2009), in particular M. Fierro, "El saber enciclopédico en el mundo islámico," *Las enciclopedias en España antes de l'Encyclopédie*, ed. A. Álvar Ezquerra, 83–104.

46. J. König and T. Whitmarsh, "Ordering Knowledge (Chapter 1)," in *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire.*

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(inscribing Umayyad al-Andalus into global Islamic culture as embodied by the Abbasid element). It further transforms Umayyad Cordoba into a place that holds a supreme position in *adab* and Arabic culture, which is portrayed as universal and perennial.

This ambitious program, strongly connected to its caliphal context, would also explain why al-Andalus only plays a subordinate role in the *ʿIqd*, in contrast to later anthologies and compendia composed in al-Andalus, that have a regional and local scope and reflect a cultural vision of the post-caliphal era on the Peninsula. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that the *ʿIqd*, written for the *caliphate*, would later become more successful in the Islamic East than in post-caliphal al-Andalus.

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