
From the author of *La poesía árabe clásica*, we now have a book whose main impetus is the vindication of Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi through his masterpiece *Al-‘iqd al-farīd* (= *The Unique Necklace*) who has been vilified and misrepresented by a great number of critics as unoriginal, derivative, and a traitor to his fatherland (al-Andalus). Even though some technical information is present, this book can be easily enjoyed by a reader who is not familiar with its subject matter. In presenting her argument, a balanced and well-documented assessment of the *‘Iqd* and its author, Veglison also offers all the important basics the curious reader needs to know about this 10th century Andalusi classic.

The first chapter (“El autor en el contexto socioliterario del califato de Córdoba” [= The Author within the Socioliterary Context of the Cordoban Caliphate]) is dedicated to the cultural context of 9th-10th century Córdoba so that the reader can fully appreciate Ibn ‘Abd al-Rabbihi’s worth as a literary figure and his impact on the Andalusi literature that followed. Veglison establishes a connection between East and West by underscoring the role that Baghdad, which at the time set the cultural and literary norm for the whole of Islamdom, played during this period in the development of the Arabic Iberian cultural landscape. As the Cordoban emirate became a caliphate it also became an important cultural center of the Muslim world. It is during this process that Ibn ‘Abd al-Rabbihi arose as a central player of his literary milieu being, as Veglison argues, a pioneer of the Andalusi *belle lettres* who produced nothing less than the first Muslim Iberia *adab* work. Her attention to Baghdad is important because for too many years there has been a tendency to isolate the Arabic Andalsian artistic output with little or insignificant ties to the *mashraqi* authors. The result of this tendency has given the mistaken impression that Arabic Andalusian literature is entirely *sui generis* instead of being part of the Arabic literature continuum.

In chapter two (“Título, estructura y contenidos de la obra” [= Title, Structure, and Contents of the Work]), the author provides a detailed description of the work’s structure and the topics that its twenty-five books address. One of the first points in this chapter is that even though the use of the word “necklace” for a work of *adab* was not new, of note is the way in which Ibn ‘Abd al-Rabbihi strung his necklace: the first eleven of the twenty-five books are given the name of a pearl or a gem going down to the
wasita (= the middle one)—which can be considered either a very special gem standing as the centerpiece of the necklace or some kind of special brooch that closes it—then the last eleven books continue with the same names as the first eleven but in reverse order so that when they are considered as whole, they form a perfectly symmetrical necklace. The original title that Ibn ʿAbd al-Rabbihi had given his text was simply Al-ʿiqd, but the copyists and scribes who read it found this way of organizing it so extraordinary that they added the qualifier “al-farīd” (= unique, with no compare), hence the title by which this work is known today. This encyclopedic text touches on all sorts of topics that Ibn ʿAbd al-Rabbihi deemed important in the intellectual formation of any well-educated (adīb) Muslim; to name just a few: military tactics, diplomacy, rhetoric, philology, zoology, psychology, and gastronomy.

In chapter three (“Propósito y objetivos del autor” [= The Author’s Purpose and Objectives]) Veglison argues that the intended reader of the ʿIqd was someone seeking to pursue a career as a statesman, and that, more specifically, Ibn ʿAbd al-Rabbihi had the poets working with the Andalusi Umayyad dynasty in mind when he put together his text. This is suggested by two interrelated topics that are given preeminence in the text: the generosity of the ruler on the one hand, and eloquence on the other. He dedicated a great deal of effort to praising as a model of princely conduct those Eastern heads of state who handsomely rewarded the best expressions of wit and eloquence. The goal was then to highlight the symbiotic relationship, as it were, between poet and ruler by, on the one hand, showing the Andalusi sovereigns the importance of being generous to the most articulate poets, and on the other hand, showing the poets that only the Wittiest, quickest, and most original discourse would yield them the biggest recompense. At the outset, what brings together the whole encyclopedic project—and not just the section devoted to generosity and eloquence—is the notion that a court poet (or any statesman for that matter) had to be a good adīb, someone well versed in all aspects of etiquette and manners, in order to succeed at the court.

Veglison identifies Ibn ʿAbd al-Rabbihi’s textual sources in chapter four (“Fuentes”), and of note is the fact that they were exclusively Eastern. She suggests that Ibn ʿAbd al-Rabbihi really did not have much choice since at the time of his composing the ʿIqd, al-Andalus still did not have an established literary canon and was lacking in the type of encyclopedic works that he uses as models. The sources that Veglison identifies are a testament to Ibn ʿAbd al-Rabbihi’s erudition and command of the Eastern textual