



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 – *taşnif*

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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

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¹ Ibn 'Abdrabbih, *al-Iqd al-farīd*, 1, 18; *The Unique Necklace*, 3.

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090116

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN
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01 Temmuz 2021



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