

A Critical Analysis of Mu'jam al-Mu'allafāt fi al-Radd alā al-Shi'a al-Ithnā Ashariyyah

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ABSTRACT

Bibliographic compilation has been a significant area of interest for Muslim scholars across various historical periods. Evaluating their bibliographic methodologies in the contemporary era can illuminate the scientific growth and the epistemological, social, and religious dimensions of Islamic intellectual ecosystems. Motivated by this imperative, the present article critically examines a bibliographic work in the domain of sectarian polemics—Mu'jam al-Mu'allafāt fi al-Radd 'alā al-Shi'a al-Ithnā 'Ashariyya—within the academic landscape of Saudi Arabia. Employing a descriptive-analytical methodology, the research interrogates the extent to which the authors of Mu'jam al-Mu'allafāt adhered to scientific and technical bibliographic practices, particularly in concept definition and substantiation, during the documentation of anti-Twelve Shi'i works across the first four Islamic centuries. The findings reveal significant methodological deficiencies: the work suffers from imprecise definitional parameters regarding key concepts such as "Twelve Shi'ism," methodological transgressions, inclusion of heterogeneous materials incongruent with Imami Shi'i scholarship, and substantive weaknesses in citations and attributions. Moreover, numerous works cited are not inherently polemical texts, and the analytical approach demonstrates a pronounced departure from scholarly objectivity. Through a critical examination of representative examples of the work's errors and limitations, this article emphasizes the urgent necessity for comprehensive revision and methodological recalibration.

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Introduction

Lexicography has been one of the key branches in the Muslim scholarly tradition, serving as a strategic tool for organizing and accessing scientific information in both linguistic and various disciplinary domains. In the contemporary era, with the advancement of information technology and modern research methods, new works in this field are expected to exhibit higher levels of scientific precision. The present article aims to scientifically evaluate one such contemporary lexicon titled *Muʿjam al-Muʿallafāt fī al-Radd ʿalā al-Shīʿa al-Ithnā ʿAshariyya* (Lexicon of Works in Refutation of Twelver Shiʿism), authored by Dr. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʿUmrān and Dr. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Zahrānī, by critiquing its methodology and degree of impartiality. This lexicon, one of the earliest efforts to compile anti-Twelver Shiʿi works up to the contemporary period within the Saudi Arabian academic context, requires critical examination from multiple perspectives, including the authors' approach to concepts, citation methods, and accuracy in source selection. The current research, focusing on the first four Islamic centuries (hijrī), seeks to assess the extent to which this work adheres to the scientific standards of lexicography. Given the increasing influence of Salafi intellectual currents in producing religious knowledge, as well as the role of lexicons in consolidating and disseminating sectarian discourses, critical analysis of such works is essential for identifying distortions and ideological biases. The objective of this study is to measure the authors' adherence to the scientific and technical principles of lexicography, including concept definition, citation accuracy, and impartiality in introducing anti-Twelver Shiʿi works.

To date, no independent and comprehensive research has been conducted on cataloging and lexicography of anti-Shiʿi works, particularly regarding the *Muʿjam al-Muʿallafāt fī al-Radd ʿalā al-Shīʿa al-Ithnā ʿAshariyya*. The present article represents the first endeavor in this domain, which, while examining the observance of scientific foundations in the lexicon's introduction, also evaluates the cataloged works in detail, thereby filling a significant gap in lexicographical studies and critiques of anti-Shiʿi sources.

Methodology

This research adopts a descriptive-analytical approach utilizing library-based resources. The primary data for the study consist of the information recorded in the book *Muʿjam al-Muʿallafāt fī al-Radd ʿalā al-Shīʿa al-Ithnā ʿAshariyya*, supplemented by data drawn from rijālī (biographical evaluation) sources, biographical dictionaries (*tarājim*), bibliographies, and texts on sectarian studies (*fīraq-nigārī*) from both Sunni and Shiʿi traditions. For greater precision, only the section pertaining to the first four hijrī centuries in the lexicon has been examined. The evaluation criteria include assessing the accuracy of key concept definitions, precision in attributing works, conformity

with scientific principles of lexicography, and measuring the authors' impartiality in selecting and introducing anti-Twelve Shi'i works. Efforts have also been made to analyze and critique evident instances of distortion, omission, or bias in quoting and introducing works, supported by robust evidence.

Findings

The content analysis of the book *Mu'jam al-Mu'allafāt fī al-Radd alā al-Shī'a al-Ithnā Ashariyya* reveals that the authors have exhibited a lack of scientific precision and, at times, ideological presuppositions in defining, categorizing, and attributing refutational works. More than half of the books introduced as refutations against Imami Shi'ism lack explicit opposition to Twelver Shi'ism in terms of content or title, or can be interpreted otherwise. The book's structure demonstrates no thematic, chronological, or geographical categorization of the works, and the method of data collection lacks transparency.

In the descriptions of the works, many introductions are brief, non-analytical, and occasionally devoid of precise references. Furthermore, the concept of "refutation" (*raddiyya*) is employed in the lexicon in an expansive and uncritical manner, encompassing general theological books, works against other sects, and even those with doubtful attributions.

The authors, when confronting sensitive terms such as "Rāfiḍa," "bid'a" (innovation), and "fitna" (sedition), reproduce the rhetoric of takfīrī Salafī currents without historical or lexical critique. This contrasts with the expectation that such a lexicon, adopting a scientific approach, would make precise distinctions among various Shi'i orientations, between authentic and fabricated sources, and between doctrinal and political critiques. Consequently, the findings indicate that the book, rather than serving as a precise scientific tool, reflects contemporary Salafī perspectives.

The study and analysis of the content of *Mu'jam al-Mu'allafāt fī al-Radd alā al-Shī'a al-Ithnā Ashariyya* demonstrate that the lexicon's authors lack sufficient methodological coherence and scientific accuracy in identifying, classifying, and describing books against Imami Shi'ism. Among the works introduced up to the end of the seventh hijrī century, a significant portion either lacks specific refutational content against Twelver Shi'ism or is accompanied by ambiguity and attribution doubts. Case-by-case examination reveals that in many instances, mere book titles or terms like "al-Rāfiḍa" have served as the basis for inclusion, without clarifying the actual content or the author's intent.

The article's author, through detailed analysis of over 30 titles from these works, has shown that only a portion can legitimately be classified as targeted refutations against Imamiyya, whereas several were originally composed against Zaydiyya, Ghulāt (extremists), or other theological sects. Additionally, some works only marginally reference Shi'ism or lack extant manuscripts and reliable descriptions.

Moreover, the authors' extensive and uncritical use of value-laden terms such as "bid'a," "Rāfiḍa," and "ḍalāla" (misguidance), without scientific differentiation among Shi'i tendencies, indicates Salafi presuppositions and a propagandistic approach in the lexicon. Overall, the findings suggest that the lexicon, rather than being a methodical and analytical tool for understanding anti-Shi'i refutational writing, mirrors the ideological outlook of contemporary Salafi currents.

The content analysis of *Mu'jam al-Mu'allafāt fī al-Radd 'alā al-Shī'a al-Ithnā 'Ashariyya* indicates that the work faces serious issues in attributing and scientifically judging the introduced works. The book's commencement with two refutations attributed to Imam al-Ṣādiq ('a.s.)—lacking historical and rijālī credibility and reported from later centuries—reinforces suspicions of targeted bias against Shi'ism. Other introduced books, such as *al-Dalīl al-Kabīr* by Qāsim al-Rassī, contain no direct critique of Imami Shi'i beliefs on imamate and were framed in debates with Zindīqs or Murji'a. Examination of referenced sources in cases like *al-Radd 'alā al-Rāfiḍa wa Ahl al-Makr* reveals that no such book exists in the claimed author's works. In other instances, such as attributing a book to 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Qummī or al-Buzūfārī, it is evident that the lexicon's authors have erred in recording authors' names, work titles, and understanding source contents. Particularly regarding al-Khwārazmī, the referenced letter's content praises the Ahl al-Bayt ('a.s.) and cannot be categorized as an anti-Shi'i refutation. Collectively, these analyses indicate that of the 26 works introduced from the second and third hijrī centuries, only a minority exhibit verifiable refutational approaches, with a substantial number lacking credibility or harboring serious doubts in attribution, content, or intent.

Innovation and Scientific Value: This article, through methodical and content-based critique of *Mu'jam al-Mu'allafāt fī al-Radd 'alā al-Shī'a al-Ithnā 'Ashariyya*, for the first time engages in a precise analysis of the conceptual foundations, methodological underpinnings, and validation of the works introduced in this lexicon. The critical examination of concepts such as Shi'a, Rāfiḍī, and refutational writing in the book's introduction, alongside an assessment of the authors' impartiality and attribution accuracy, opens a new perspective in evaluating anti-Shi'i sources. Drawing on robust library-based resources, this research not only enables historical validation of the books but also sheds new light on distortions, sectarian motives, and common methods in contemporary Salafi knowledge production.

Conclusion

The methodical examination of *Mu'jam al-Mu'allafāt fī al-Radd 'alā al-Shī'a al-Ithnā 'Ashariyya* reveals that this work, despite its effort to compile refutations against Shi'ism, lacks sufficient precision in conceptualization, research methodology, and critical evaluation of sources. Incorrect conceptual

foundations, the absence of clear distinction between Shi'i antagonism and scientific critique, and disregard for attribution accuracy standards undermine the lexicon's scientific credibility. Furthermore, the analysis of the introduced works' content indicates that many sources either fundamentally lack a refutational pedigree or are historically suspect and undocumented. Consequently, this lexicon cannot serve as a reliable source in scholarly studies of the history of religious debates and refutational writing against Twelver Imami Shi'ism.

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