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Verificatory Inconsistency and the Accommodation of *Ghulūw*-Adjacent Idioms in Imāmī Literature

The charge of *ghulūw* levelled against Imāmī Shī'ism has typically been met by appeal to the tradition's own formal rejection of the classical *ghulāt* doctrines such as the divinity of the Imams, their prophethood, the total cosmic delegation of creative authority to them among others. These doctrines were explicitly condemned by the Imams themselves and have been formally excluded from mainstream Shī'ism.

However, a range of doctrines and devotional practices now constitutive of mainstream Shī'ī theology and piety fall within the ambit of *ghulūw* in a broader sense established by the Qur'ān, the Prophet and the Imams. Among such doctrines are *wilāya takwīniyya* (cosmic authority), the comprehensive *'ilm al-ghayb* (knowledge of the unseen) of the Imams, their witnessing of the community's deeds, their hearing of those who address them after death, *tawassul* (reaching out to the Prophet and his family as mediating cosmic agency), and *'isma* (infallibility) in its expansive formulation.

This paper argues that the source of this condition is a structural methodological inconsistency in the application of verificatory principles across the genres of Imāmī literature. The Imams prescribed a host of principles in addition to the central criterion of positive Qur'ānic concurrence (*mā wāfaqa al-Qur'ān*) as the criteria for accepting reports attributed to them. In practice, across *du'ā'* and *ziyāra* literature, reports of praise (*akhbār al-manāqib*), theology (*kalām*), and Qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*), the operative standard has been the weaker criterion of non-contradiction with the Quran, supplemented by the *bi-idhni'llāh* (by the consent of God) qualifier, leniency in relation to non-binding Sharia norms (*al-tasāmuḥ fī adillat al-sunan*), and appeal to Imamic esoteric authority.

At the centre of this accommodative trend stands the sentiment carried by the phrase: *nazzilūnā 'an al-rubūbiyya wa-qūlū finā mā shī'tum* (remove lordship from us and then say whatever you wish about us) paraphrased from reports cited in early Imami literature. This sentiment supplies the logic underlying the genre-differentiated verificatory relaxation: once *rubūbiyya* alone is excluded, all further attribution is treated as open and the verificatory framework is relaxed. The verificatory framework instructed by the Imams when taken as a whole and applied consistently, provides the resources to identify *ghulūw* adjacent idioms within Imāmī literature.



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