

## Tabriz Gasimov

### The Definition of *Ghulāt*

Within Shi'ism, although *ghulāt* (extremists) is generally understood to refer to those who deified the Imams, hadith literature reveals that the term possessed various meanings. To determine its precise definition, one must first examine the concept of "lie" (*kadhib*), which in lexicography also carries meanings related to breaking covenants or betraying trusts.

According to numerous narrations, *ghulāt* refers to individuals who failed to preserve confidential teachings and instead disclosed them publicly. The Imams strongly condemned this exposure, stating that those who reveal secrets would face worldly dangers and severe punishment in the Hereafter. For instance, Imam al-Sadiq emphasized that betrayers of secrets would not remain safe, while Imam al-Rida cursed al-Mughira ibn Sa'id for "lying" about Imam al-Sadiq—interpreted here as violating a trust by disclosing secrets. Conversely, companions like Jabir al-Ju'fi were praised for preserving these confidential teachings.

Substantiating this definition of *ghulāt* would lead to two significant conclusions in Shi'i hadith studies and theology:

Narrators deemed unreliable merely due to the *ghulāt* label may actually be trustworthy, making their transmissions acceptable.

Hadiths previously regarded as unauthentic would be reconsidered as authentic, necessitating a re-evaluation of fundamental Shi'i doctrines, particularly *Tawhīd* and Imamate.

The literature notes other reasons for the *ghulāt* label, including: prioritizing the esoteric (*bāṭin*) dimension over the outward (*ẓāhir*) Shari'ah, incorrect allegorical interpretations, abandoning *taqīyya* to openly oppose enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt, adopting incorrect political stances, and attributing miracles to the Imams without explicitly affirming God's permission. The core meanings of these rejected narrations may indeed be correct.

Finally, this study will analyze the doctrinal beliefs of historical *ghulāt* sects to establish a connection between the proposed definition and historical reality.



## Tabriz Gasimov

### Tusi Research Centre

Tabriz Gasimov, from Azerbaijan, holds an MA (2009) in Theology from Baku State University. After graduating, he continued his Islamic studies in Najaf, Iraq, for four years at a *madrasa*, before receiving a scholarship to study at Al-Mustafa/Ahlul-Bayt University in Qom, Iran, where he completed his studies in 2018. His research interests include Islamic philosophy, logic, theology, and Islamic mysticism, and his MA thesis focused on the question "Is the Quran uncorrupted?". He is fluent in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and English, and has authored and co-authored several books on Islamic thought, philosophy, and theology, as well as translating and interpreting key classical Islamic texts from Arabic into Azerbaijani. He is the founder of TTAM (Tusi Research Centre), where he teaches Islamic philosophy, logic, theology, and languages.