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### *Ghulūw* and Esoteric Qur'anic Interpretation in the Early Islamic Centuries: Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Ju'fī as a Case Study

This study offers a critical examination of the interpretive methodology associated with *ghulūw* currents in the early Islamic centuries, with a particular focus on esoteric Qur'anic narrations attributed to Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Ju'fī as a case study. It investigates the epistemological and hermeneutical foundations of these reports, especially their reliance on *bāṭinī* (inner/esoteric) readings of the Qur'anic text and their departure from established linguistic and contextual interpretive frameworks.

The research is guided by a central question concerning the methodological coherence of esoteric interpretive practices attributed to early *ghulāt*-linked traditions, and the extent to which these practices can be situated within or outside the broader spectrum of early Islamic exegetical discourse. It further explores how concepts such as *ẓāhir* (apparent meaning) and *bāṭin* (hidden meaning) are employed within these narrations to construct alternative layers of meaning.

Methodologically, the study adopts a historical-critical and analytical approach, combining *isnād* analysis with close textual examination of narrations attributed to Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Ju'fī in early hadith, *rijāl*, and heresiographical sources. It also engages with modern hermeneutical and critical approaches to Qur'anic interpretation in order to evaluate the methodological structures underlying these texts.

The study focuses on the formative period of Islamic transmission (2nd–4th centuries AH), tracing how interpretive authority is constructed and how esoteric meanings are justified within specific narrative frameworks. Particular attention is given to the internal consistency, interpretive mechanisms, and epistemic claims embedded in these reports.

By critically analyzing these materials, the paper seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of early Islamic exegetical diversity and to reassess the methodological boundaries of esoteric interpretation within the discourse of Qur'anic exegesis.

**Keywords:** *Ghulūw*, Qur'anic exegesis, esoteric interpretation, Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Ju'fī, hermeneutics, isnād criticism, early Islamic thought.



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Dr. Mohammad Khalil Tarraf is an academic, researcher, and educator specializing in Arabic Language and Literature. He holds a Ph.D. in Arabic Language and Literature from Saint Joseph University in Beirut, and currently serves as a university lecturer and Coordinator of the Arabic Language Teaching Program at USAL University. With more than two decades of experience in education, academic administration, and cultural work, he has contributed extensively to teaching, curriculum development, and scholarly research. His publications and research focus on Arabic literature, linguistics, Qur'anic studies, and Islamic thought. Dr. Tarraf has also participated in numerous academic conferences and seminars and has supervised and reviewed scholarly theses and publications. His current research interests include Arabic linguistics, literary studies, Qur'anic exegesis, discourse analysis, and Arabic language pedagogy.