

al-Ḥallāj Baghdad 922 — Eighth Topos Case, Configuration H

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Index card v0.2 for the Layered Methodology Research Programme. Extends the configuration series A–G with Configuration H.

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Layer profile (6 layers)

Layer 1 — al-Ḥallāj's own works (mostly destroyed)

- **Dating:** ca. 890–922 (teaching, sermons, poems)
- **Source:** *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn* (partly preserved, Persian translation by Rūzbihān Baqlī); *Dīwān al-Ḥallāj* (reconstructed by Massignon 1931 from scattered sources; Ernst 2018 translates 117 poems); mystical sayings (~350 quotations); 27 *Riwayāt* (hadith-like sayings spoken by cosmic entities)
- **Core content:** mystical union with the divine; public utterance of esoteric doctrine; the famous declaration *Anā al-ḥaqq* (“I am the Truth/God”); doctrine of incarnational possibility; proposal that the obligation of pilgrimage could be fulfilled *at home* (without travel to Mecca)
- **D1:** near-contemporary (first-person)
- **D2:** G1 (written collection) + G2 (orally transmitted, later written)
- **D3:** lost-intermediate (original works burned 922, ashes scattered in Tigris; reconstruction via Sufi collectors of the 4th/10th c.)
- **D4:** mystical-teaching, against institutional religious authorities
- **D5:** fragmentary (Massignon reconstruction; Ernst 2018 with critical caveats that Massignon found authenticity hard to establish)

Layer 2 — Trial records and political logic 919–922

- **Dating:** 919 inquiry reopened, 922 execution

- **Source:** primary trial records do not survive independently; reconstruction from later accounts (Ṭabarī ca. 923, Ibn al-Jawzī 12th c.) and political-historical sources on vizier politics
- **Core content:** political logic following the fiscal crisis of 919: the inquiry was reopened probably to undermine Caliph al-Muqtadir's confidence in vizier Ali ibn Isa and his ally, the chamberlain Naṣr al-Qushūrī (Massignon, *Passion*, p. 291). Formal charge: heresy (claims of miracles, incarnationist teaching, denial of *tawḥīd*); condemned for "altering the legal rituals" (pilgrimage question). Eleven years of imprisonment before execution
- **D1:** near-contemporary
- **D2:** G1 (administrative-juridical writing, transmitted into later historiography)
- **D3:** known-intermediate (Ṭabarī as the closest witness)
- **D4:** political (court-internal power struggle under the pretext of religious accusation)
- **D5:** contested — Massignon's standard reconstruction critically revised in recent research (Irwin 2015)

Layer 3 — Early Muslim historiography and Sufi hagiography 10th–12th c.

- **Dating:** ca. 925–1200 (Ṭabarī d. 923, Hujwīrī d. ca. 1077, 'Aṭṭār d. ca. 1221)
- **Source:** Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*; Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-mahjūb*; 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*; *Akhbār al-Ḥallāj* (anonymous collection of anecdotes, compiled ca. 360/971)
- **Core content:** Early reports vacillate between condemnation as heretic and exaltation as martyr of love for God. Sufi tradition develops the explanation *ifshā' al-sirr* ("betraying the secret") — al-Ḥallāj is held to have publicly uttered esoteric truth and was therefore justly executed because esoteric knowledge must remain hidden
- **D1:** mid-range (Ṭabarī near-contemporary, 'Aṭṭār 300 years later)
- **D2:** G1 (historiography) + G2 (Sufi tradition oral, then written)
- **D3:** known-intermediate; cross-genre transposed (records → hagiography)
- **D4:** religious-didactic (Sufi teaching about secrecy); apologetic (for or against al-Ḥallāj)
- **D5:** contested (within Islamic tradition itself), later largely canonising (as martyr topos)

Layer 4 — Later Islamic and Persian-Turkish transfiguration 13th–17th c.

- **Dating:** Rūmī (13th c.) through Ottoman-Persian Ḥallāj veneration

- **Source:** Rūmī, *Mathnawī*; Persian and Turkish Ḥallāj legends (Massignon 1941–46, “La légende de Hallâcé Mansûr en pays turcs”)
- **Core content:** Complete saintly transfiguration. Rūmī explicitly defends al-Ḥallāj: the *Anā al-ḥaqq* declaration is testimony of mystical union, not heresy. Topos: the saint executed for the truth. Image of ashes that form the words *Anā al-ḥaqq* on the Tigris; expectation of return in 30 days; topos of the executioners leading him to execution while he dances and laughs in chains
- **D1:** long-range
- **D2:** G1 (Mathnawī, hagiography) + G2 (local veneration tradition)
- **D3:** lost-intermediate (transmission chain unclear at points); cross-genre transposed (hagiography → folk tradition)
- **D4:** religious-didactic, mystical-pedagogical
- **D5:** canonical in parts of the Islamic world (Sufi, Shi‘i, Turkish), contested in Sunni orthodoxy

Layer 5 — Massignon’s Western reconstruction 1922–1962

- **Dating:** Massignon’s dissertation 1922, *La Passion* in 4 volumes 2nd ed. 1975 (posthumous)
- **Source:** Louis Massignon, *La Passion de Husayn Ibn Mansûr al-Hallâj, martyr mystique de l’Islam* (Paris 1922/1975); Massignon/Kraus, *Akhbâr al-Ḥallâj* (3rd ed. 1957)
- **Core content:** lifelong research project of a French orientalist with deep personal interest. Massignon reconstructs al-Ḥallāj’s work from scattered sources, establishes him as a major Sufi mystic for the Western reader, accentuates the Christological parallels (martyr topos, “passion”) — decisively shaping Western Ḥallāj reception for a century
- **D1:** distant
- **D2:** G1 (academic historiography)
- **D3:** known-intermediate (Massignon works with 10th-c. sources)
- **D4:** orientalist-philological, personally-religiously motivated (Massignon was a practising Catholic), late-colonial
- **D5:** canonical for ~70 years, increasingly critically revised since the 1990s

Layer 6 — Revisionist scholarship from the 1990s

- **Dating:** from ca. 1990, intensively from 2010
- **Source:** Robert Irwin (2015), “Al-Hallaj’s Truth, Massignon’s Fiction”; Carl W. Ernst (2018), *Hallaj: Poems of a Sufi Martyr* (Northwestern UP, ISBN 9780810137356); critical editions Šaybī (Baghdad 1974)

- **Core content:** Massignon’s account itself is problematised as historical construction. Ernst emphasises that the authenticity of many “Ḥallāj poems” is hard to secure and Massignon made selection decisions favouring a Christian-passion-oriented reading. The political logic of the execution 919–922 is weighted against the mystical accusation narrative
- **D1:** long-range to distant
- **D2:** G1 (academic historiography, edition)
- **D3:** known-intermediate
- **D4:** science-historical, post-orientalist
- **D5:** emerging, not yet canonical; methodologically explicit

Configuration H (new)

H — Religious accusation as a pretext for political logic; knower has own preserved (but destroyed and reconstructed) voice; posthumous rehabilitation through the same tradition.

Six features distinguishing H from A–G:

1. **Religious accusation masks political logic.** Unlike C (Hypatia: confessional rivalry within unstable state power) and G (Vavilov: state-decreed pseudoscience): with al-Ḥallāj the formal charge is ritual-juridical (pilgrimage violation), the *actual* logic is vizier politics (undermining Ali ibn Isa). Religious heresy accusation is pretext, not main motive.
2. **Own works nominally present, factually destroyed, reconstructively transmitted.** Unlike G (Vavilov: complete work preserved) and A (Socrates: never written): al-Ḥallāj did *publish*, his works were *systematically destroyed* (burning 922, ashes in Tigris), but *partially reconstructed* by 4th/10th-c. Sufi collectors (Akhbār al-Ḥallāj). This reconstruction is source-critically not directly near-contemporary and partly legendary.
3. **Apocryphal/misattributed phrase as topos marker — as in B, C, E.** *Anā al-ḥaqq* (“I am the Truth/God”) is popularly held to be al-Ḥallāj’s key phrase and reason for his execution. Source-critically: it was *not* the official execution charge (formally convicted for pilgrimage violation). The attribution as “martyr’s word” is transmitted Sufi construction, not record-based.
4. **Execution spectacle is transmitted, but by hagiographers, not by records.** 1,000 lashes, hands and feet cut off, tongue removed, crucifixion on the gibbet — these details derive from later Sufi accounts which are literarily elaborated (see

martyr topos: he dances and laughs in chains, he expects return in 30 days, his ashes write in the Tigris). Source-critically not near-contemporary.

5. **Posthumous rehabilitation through the same tradition.** Unlike F (Calendar Case: posthumous rehabilitation by succeeding emperor, different power configuration) and G (Vavilov: institutional rehabilitation after Stalin's death): al-Ḥallāj is venerated as saint *by the same Islamic tradition* in whose name he was executed — especially in Sufism (Hujwīrī, 'Aṭṭār, Rūmī), but partly also in mainstream Sunni theology. Rehabilitation *by the same tradition* is structurally different from rehabilitation *by a different power configuration*.

6. **Massignon effect: Western construction overlays Islamic original.** Specific to H: the *central Western secondary source* (Massignon) is itself an ideologically-religiously motivated construction (Christianising, passion-oriented), which has dominated academic reception for ~70 years. Only the revisionist scholarship from the 1990s makes the construction visible. Methodologically significant finding: **the secondary source itself is Layer 5 with its own D4 functional context**, not a neutral access to the primary material.

Three v0.1 findings — re-examined

Finding 1 (apocryphal phrase): *Anā al-ḥaqq* is a classic apocryphal topos marker. Was **not** the official execution charge, is popularly held to be. With al-Ḥallāj: four of eight cases have apocryphal or misattributed topos phrase (Archimedes B, Hypatia C, Galileo E, al-Ḥallāj H). v0.1 finding further confirmed; also beyond Europe.

Finding 2 (knowers without first-person voice): al-Ḥallāj has voice, but this voice is *destroyed and reconstructed*. Quota remains 4/8 without, 4/8 with voice; but al-Ḥallāj's position differentiates the scale: between “no voice” (Maya scribes) and “fully preserved voice” (Vavilov, Galileo) there is an intermediate state “voice destroyed, hagiographically reconstructed”.

Finding 3 (empirical decidability): With al-Ḥallāj — unlike F (Calendar) or G (Vavilov) — *no empirically decidable question* lies at the centre, but a theological one (What is *tawḥīd*? Is incarnation possible? What does *Anā al-ḥaqq* mean?). This is the majority configuration: in 6 of 8 cases the matter at dispute is *not* empirically decidable. F and G remain the exception.

Connection to v0.1 and v0.2 configurations

- $H \leftrightarrow B$ (Archimedes): both with apocryphal phrase, both with political logic in the background. But B: power-exoneration with later topos inversion; H: religious accusation as pretext for political logic with posthumous saintly transfiguration.

- H ↔ C (Hypatia): both with religious accusation framework. C: confessional rivalry without D5 consolidation. H: religious accusation as political pretext with posthumous rehabilitation through the same tradition.
- H ↔ G (Vavilov): both with political power logic behind formal charge. G: state-decreed pseudoscience, secular frame, posthumous institutional rehabilitation. H: religious frame, posthumous saintly transfiguration. Structurally parallel power logic, different legitimation forms.

Limitations

- Index card, not full analysis. Full version would go to Arabic primary sources (Ṭabarī, Akhbār al-Ḥallāj, *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*) and analyse Baghdad vizier politics 919–922 in detail.
- Secondary source selection Western-anglophone (Massignon, Ernst, Irwin). Arabic and Persian Ḥallāj scholarship (Šaybī 1974 in Baghdad; Iranian scholarship) referenced, not directly examined.
- Configuration H formulated based on one case. Comparison cases (probably: Suhrawardī Aleppo 1191; Jewish martyr topoi in the Middle Ages) would stabilise the type.
- v0.1 Eurocentrism is for the first time structurally addressed by H: Islamic-Mediterranean space, Arabic-Persian source situation, different tradition of the truth-power configuration. Does not, however, shift the methodological axis — Framework D1–D5 / G1–G6 remains conceptually grounded in Greco-Roman material.

Sources

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Index card v0.2, status 2026-05-30. Configuration H formulated for the first time with this case. Closure type: USE-CASE-SCHLUSS. Comparison cases (Suhrawardī; Jewish martyr topoi) in subsequent v0.2 iterations.