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## *Foreword to the Abridged Edition*

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HALLAJ was indeed a historical person, condemned to death in 922 of our era following a political trial, a *cause célèbre*, of which there survive fragments of hostile accounts that are, by the very fact of their hostility, testaments of his historical authenticity. He has survived also as a hero of legend. Even now in Islamic countries people remember him and represent him as an itinerant worker of miracles, sometimes as a man madly in love with God, sometimes as a charlatan. In Iran, Turkey and Pakistan, where the wide diffusion of great Persian poems took place, poetry has stylized the character of this saint, the deified ecstatic, whom they call "Mansur Hallaj". It was he who, from the height of the gibbet, uttered the apocalyptic cry that announces the Judge of the Last Judgment: *Ana'l-Haqq*, I am the Truth.

So writes Louis Massignon in the preface to the 1922 edition of his magisterial study *The Passion of al-Hallaj*.

Critical study of the authentic sources of this more poetic than literary theme has enabled me to establish that Hallaj had actually found his vocation as the "mystic pillar," the "spiritual martyr" of Islam, while going on the hajj; that he had subsequently wished to "substitute" himself for the legal offering of victims that is consecrated at 'Arafat for the annual general pardon of the community; that afterwards he had publicly proclaimed in Baghdad his vow to seek death in the holy war of divine love—thirteen years, at least, prior to his execution.

This study, undertaken in Cairo in 1907, on the verge of my apprenticeship in spoken and written Arabic, and stimulated by exposure to poignant and wise maxims . . . ended up by convincing me of the veracity of this pure witness, who was strangely a friend of God unto the very sacrifice of himself, Khalil Allah, like Abraham.

So begins the author's preface to the new edition of his *Passion*, published posthumously in its greatly enlarged form in 1975, and translated in its Bollingen Series English edition of 1983. The present volume is an abridgement of volume 1 (*The Life of al-Hallaj*) with inclusions from volume 3 (*The Teaching of al-Hallaj*). This abridgement, stripped of its thorough and at times awesome scholarly apparatus (its transliteration diacritical marks, its footnotes, and exhaustive bibliography), is intended simply to render more accessible to the nonspecialist reader the dramatic life and radical thought of this extraordinary tenth-century Muslim mystic. It is not intended to replace the four-volume text, but rather to point the interested reader back to the larger, fully documented work of its author. Massignon himself foresaw the possibility and indeed need of an eventual abridgement designed for this purpose, and considered espe-

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cially chapters five (The Indictments), six (The Trials), and seven (The Martyrdom) to be “the heart and center” of his study. Though large sections of volume 2 (*The Survival of al-Hallaj*), representing his legacy up to the present day in Islamic literature and mystical tradition, are regarded by many scholars of Islam as “original and fundamental” for understanding the thought of Hallaj and of the many Muslim theological schools and sects and their internal correspondences with Judaic and Christian traditions, publishing aims and limits required severe cutting and concentration on the primary drama of his life. To this end virtually the whole of volumes 2, 3, and 4 (*Bibliography, Technical Terms, and Index*) was omitted, along with the other aforementioned apparatus materials, all statistical lists and tables, and wherever possible the author’s lengthy authentications of primary and corroborative texts that are essential to the larger presentation.

Also absent from this abridgement is an extended biographical introduction to Massignon himself, which appears as part of the translator’s foreword to volume 1. Massignon himself would not have objected to this omission in deference to concentration solely on Hallaj.

By focusing for the general reader on Hallaj’s life and times, and especially on Baghdad the site of his martyrdom and a city then of great prominence on the world stage, there may be temptations to draw parallels with the contemporary history of this great surviving city. Above both dramatic epochs, however, soars the figure of Hallaj himself, whose outcry for justice arose from his love of his God as the Eternal Truth. It is a piercing story that Massignon worked throughout his life to make known to the world-at-large.

While the reader is urged to examine firsthand the four-volume work itself, including the extensive bibliographical listing of Islamic sources and both Muslim and non-Muslim studies of the sources not possible to include here, brief mention should be made of selected contemporary studies available in English of particular relevance to Islamic mysticism, Hallaj, and Louis Massignon:

William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love*. Albany, 1983.

Benjamin Clark, ed. and tr. of Louis Massignon’s *Essay on the Technical Language of Muslim Mysticism*. Notre Dame, 1994.

Carl Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*. Albany, 1985.

Martin Lings, *What is Sufism?* London, 1983.

H. Mason, *The Death of al-Hallaj*. Notre Dame, 1979.

H. Mason, *Memoir of a Friend: Louis Massignon*. Notre Dame, 1988.

H. Mason, *Testimonies and Reflections: Essays of Louis Massignon*. Notre Dame, 1990.

Annemarie Schimmel, *As Through a Veil: Mystical Poetry in Islam*. New York, 1982.

Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill, 1975.

Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun*. London & The Hague, 1980.

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K. I. Semaan, *Murder in Baghdad*, a translation of the Egyptian poet Salah 'Abd al-Sabbur's 1965 play *Ma'sat al-Hallaj*. Leiden, 1972.

For general works of introduction to Islam the following are a few of the many possible suggestions:

John Esposito, *Islam the Straight Path*. Oxford, 1991.

Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*. Chicago, 1979.

Malise Ruthven, *Islam and the World*. Oxford, 1984.

and the older but still valuable *Mohammedanism* by H. A. R. Gibb (Penguin Classics), and, among the many penetrating studies of S. N. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*. Boston, 1966.

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