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Taḥrīf

(A.), change, alteration, forgery; used with regard to words, and more specifically with regard to what Jews and Christians are supposed to have done to their respective Scriptures (*yuḥarrifūna ʾl-kalima ʿan mawāḍiʿhi* , sūra IV, 46, V, 13; see also II, 75), in the sense of perverting the language through altering words from their proper meaning, changing words in form or substituting words or letters for others. Such substitution is also termed *tabdīl* , a wider term, used also in other contexts, but in the Ḳurʾān and later literature practically synonymous with **taḥrīf** (see II, 59, VII, 162, and the commentary of Mudjāhid b. Djabr [*q.v.*] to IV, 46, where he explains *ḥarrafa* by *baddala*).

The Ḳurʾān accepts the *Tawrāt* and *Indjīl* [*q.vv.*] as genuine divine revelations taken from the same Guarded Tablets as the Ḳurʾān itself and brought by true messengers to both Jews and Christians respectively. Those, however, did not adhere to their Law, but tampered with their own Scriptures (III, 78, with the verb *lawā* V, 15, 45). The Ḳurʾān does not state explicitly how this was done and when, but later commentaries give various explanations. Some relate it to the times of Moses (see commentaries to II, 58-9, wherein the Banū Isrāʾīl are accused of having changed (orally?) the word *ḥiṭṭa*). Later authors accuse Israelite Kings or Priests, especially Ezra the Scribe (see below) or Byzantine rulers, etc. The accusation that Jewish contemporaries of Muḥammad concealed (*kitmān*) Biblical material, e.g. the punishment (stoning) for adultery or the Biblical prediction of Muḥammad's prophecy (see the commentaries on V, 42-9, and Ibn Hishām, ii, 382 ff., 393-5) is also considered to be **taḥrīf**.

The accusation of forgery was a widespread polemical motif, already in pre-Islamic times used by pagan, Samaritan and Christian authors to discredit their opponents and Scriptures. In the Medinan sūras it is a central theme, apparently used to explain away the contradictions between the Bible and the Ḳurʾān and to establish that the coming of the Prophet and the ¶ rise of Islam had indeed been predicted in the "true" Bible.

In the first centuries of Islam, **taḥrīf** was not a central theme, though well-known. *Ḥadīth* and early commentaries filled out the gaps left by the relevant Ḳurʾānic verses. Mudjāhid explained that those who hide and distort Biblical verses are the Jewish *ʿulamāʾ* (see al-Ṭabarī on the above verses). Others stated explicitly that the Jews do so in order to hide the fact that Muḥammad was predicted in their Torah (Muḳātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr* , Cairo 1979, i, 118, to II, 76, see also 461). Some explained that

taḥrīf means that the Jews "made the lawful forbidden and the forbidden lawful, and took the truth as falsehood and the falsehood as truth" (al-Ṭabarī, on II, 59).

Muslim authors understood the falsification as either *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* , distortion of the meaning of the text, or *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* , falsification of the text itself (see the *Risāla* of the 3rd/9th century writer Ibn al-Layth, in A.Z. Ṣafwat, *Djamharat rasāʾil al-ʿArab* , iii, Cairo 1356/1937, 296 ff., who seems to know both meanings and defends the Ḳurʾān against the counter-argument of having also been altered). Early Christian authors already defend themselves and their Scriptures against both accusations (S.H. Griffith, *ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī's Kitāb al-Burhān* . *Christian kalām in the first Abbasid century*, in *Le Muséon* , xlvi [1983], 165-8). Some Muslim authors take *taḥrīf* to mean only the distortion of meaning of the text, notably al-Ḳāsim b. Ibrāhīm (d. 246/860; see I. Di Matteo, *Confutazione contro i Christiani dello Zaydita al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm* , in *RSO*, ix [1922], 319) and Ibn Khbaldūn, who rejects the idea of actual falsification of Jewish or Christian Scriptures "since custom prevents people who have a (revealed) religion from dealing with their divine Scripture in such a manner" (*Muḳaddima* , ed. Quatrèmere, i, 12-13, tr. F. Rosenthal i, 20-1; most printed editions omit this remark).

The more common understanding, however, of *taḥrīf* among Muslim authors, especially from the 5th/11th century up to modern times, has been the one which accused Jews and Christians of having deliberately falsified the text of their own respective Scriptures. Jewish oral tradition, seen as an unauthorised addition to Scripture, is also considered to be part of this falsification. So is Christian canon and other law. In this context, Muslim authors stressed the differences between the "three Bibles": the Hebrew Bible of the Jews; the Samaritan Bible; and the "Greek Bible" (i.e. the Septuagint) of the Christians (al-Masʿūdī, *Murūdj*, i, 118-19 = § 115; al-Bīrūnī, *al-Āthār al-bāḳiya* , 20-1, tr. Sachau, 24; Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Faṣl fi ʾl-milal* , i, 117, 198, ii, 7-10) as proof of the falsification.

The argument of *taḥrīf* is refuted already in an early polemical text attributed to the Byzantine Emperor Leo III (A. Jeffery, *Ghevond's text of the correspondence between ʿUmar II and Leo III* , in *Harvard Theol . Review* , xxxvii [1944], 269-321) with the statement that Jews and Christians share the same, widely-known divine text, and that Ezra, who redacted the Bible, was a pious, reliable person. The same arguments appear in later Jewish writings (see Ibn Kammūna [*q.v.*], *Tanḳīḥ al-abḥāth li ʾl-milal al-thalāth* , ed. and tr. M. Perlmann, Berkeley 1971, 1967, ch. 2). The personality of Ezra-ʿUzayr [*q.v.*] becomes very involved in this discussion in the 4th/10th century, and especially with Ibn Ḥazm [*q.v.*], who in his *Faṣl* explicitly accused "'Azrā" of having falsified and added interpolations into the Biblical text. He also arranged systematically and in scholarly detail the arguments against the authenticity of the Biblical text in the first (Hebrew Bible) and second part (New Testament of his book: chronological and geographical inaccuracies and contradictions; theological impossibilities (anthropomorphic expressions, stories of fornication and whoredom, and the attributing of sins to prophets), as well as lack of reliable transmission (*tawātur*) of the text. He explains how the falsification of the Pentateuch could have taken place while there existed only one copy of the Pentateuch kept by the Aaronid priests in the Temple in Jerusalem. Ibn Ḥazm's impact on later Muslim polemics was great, and the themes which he raised with regard to *taḥrīf* and other polemical ideas—updated only slightly by some-later authors, such as the Jewish convert to Islam al-Samawʾal al-Maghribī (d. 570/1175) in his *Ifḥām al-Yahūd* (ed. and tr. M. Perlmann, PAAJR, 32, 1964)—became the standard themes of later Muslim polemical literature against both Jews and Christians (see, e.g., al-Ḳarāfī's (d. 684/1285) *al-Adjwiba al-fakhira ʿan al-asʾila al-fādjira* Ibn

Taymiyya; and Ibn Ḳayyim al-Djawziyya).

Modern European Bible criticism is taken by some Muslim authors as a vindication of the theory of *taḥrīf* (see Raḥmat Allāh al-Hindī's (1818-91) *Iẓhār al-ḥaḳḳ* ; cf. C. Schirrmacher, *Mit den Waffen des Gegners* , *Christlichmuslimische Kontroversen im 19 u. 20 Jahrhundert* , Berlin 1992, and M. Khalīfa Ḥasan Aḥmad, *ʿAlāḳāt al-Islām bi ʾl-Yahūdiyya . Ruʾya Islāmiyya fī maṣādir al-Tawrāt al-ḥāliyya* , Cairo 1986).

In Sunnī-Shīʿī polemics, the problem of *taḥrīf* arose with regard to the text of the Ḳurʾān. Sunnī authors accused the Shīʿa of believing that the Ḳurʾān had been falsified. Early Shīʿī material on this topic seems to be lost; apparently only some Shīʿī authors held this view mainly with regard to omissions (of Ḳurʾānic references to ʿAlī and his family) and some minor changes in Ḳurʾānic verses. Although the Shīʿīs practically accepted the existing Ḳurʾānic text, these accusations have been raised sporadically up to modern times (E. Kohlberg, *Some notes on the Imāmite attitude to the Qurʾān* , in *Islamic philosophy and the Classical tradition. For R. Walzer* , Oxford 1972, 209-24).

(Hava Lazarus-Yafeh)

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