Conflict with the Scholars or Rihlah 'Ilmīyah: A Biographical Assessment of Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 899/1493)

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Abstract
In this paper, I propose a revised biography of the 15th-century North African Sufi scholar Aḥmad Zarrūq. An important aspect of Zarrūq’s conventional biographies involves his purported hostile relationship with other Moroccan scholars. When he was still in his twenties, Zarrūq departed from Fez (in Morocco) and travelled to the East, finally settling at Misrāṭah (in Libya). One of Zarrūq’s biographers reported that he left Fez because of his hostile relationship with certain Moroccan scholars. On the basis of this contention, some later biographers have painted him as a rebel against the socio-political environment of Morocco, whilst others have interpreted his departure and migration to Libya as an example of a spiritual journey to the East in search of knowledge.

Key words: Aḥmad Zarrūq, Morocco, Biographical Studies, North African Sufism.

I. Introduction:
Aḥmad Zarrūq was an influential and intriguing figure in the field of Sufism in the Maghrib. Interpreting the Shādhīlī’s notion of usūlī tasawwuf, Zarrūq constructed the theory of Juridical Sufism on its theological and metaphysical grounds. The presentation of Islam in such an integrated form that appealed and attracted not only the Muslim scholars but saints also, was his most impressive accomplishment. His teachings and intellectual legacy left a lasting impact on Maghribi society, in particular in the circles of the Shādhīliyyah which became the Zarrūqiyyah order in the Maghrib. Zarrūq is given space in many of the renowned biographies dealing with the scholars of North Africa particular Morocco and Fez (al-Sakhāwī, [1966] 222/1; al-Timbuktī, 1980/84). His lineage can be traced as Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn b. al-Fāṣil b. Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl al-Lakhmī al-Dīn Abū Ḥasan ʿAbbās, known as Zarrūq (al-Timbuktī, 1980, 84).

Zarrūq autobiography al-Kunnāsh gives substantial information about his early life. He writes: “I was born at sunrise, on Thursday, 22nd Muḥarram, 846 A.H. (7th June, 1442 C.E.). My mother passed away on the following Saturday when she was 23 years old and my father on the following Wednesday in his 32nd year; his father had died six days before my birth in his 53rd year.1 Then I lived under the protection of Allāh with my grandmother, Umm al-Banīn (Zarrūq, 1980, 11).” Umm al-Banīn was a jurist. Zarrūq

1 Al-Nāṣirī recorded in his book, that an epidemic attacked Fez in 846/1442 and presumably the parents of Zarrūq died because of this plague (al-Nāṣirī, 1959, 100/4).
considered her an expert scholar and pious woman. Two women well-known for their
command of jurisprudence Umm Hānî and Fātimah, sisters of a famous jurist Abū
Muhammad ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿAbdūsī (d. 859/1455) were the friends of his grandmother.
Zarrūq claims that al-ʿAbdūsī was a symbol of generosity and an imām in guidance. He
remained the khaṭīb of Jāmiʿ al-Qarawīyīn. Zarrūq claims that he successfully
eliminated heresy from Maghribi society and implemented the rules and regulation of the
sharīʿah. His well-known work was in the field of fiqh al-ḥadīth (Zarrūq, 1980, 19).
Al-Suyūṭī writes in Aʾyān al-Aʾyān that “He was a prominent scholar, expert and pious
man and he was muftī of Fez.” Al-Sakhāwī records: “He had a very sharp memory and he
was mufti of the Maghrib al-Aṣā and imām of Jāmiʿ al-Qarawīyīn. He was master of
jurists and Sufis. He was teacher of many renowned scholars like Ibn al-ʿAmlāl the
researcher, al-Qūrī the jurist, and Abū Muhammad al-Wiryāghlī and many others
(al-Timbukti, 1980, 84).” Zarrūq in the company of his grandmother used to visit al-
ʿAbdūsī frequently because she had scholarly meetings with his sisters Umm Hānî and
Fātimah (Zarrūq, 1980, 16, 18, 19).

In this way, Zarrūq was nurtured in the hands of a teacher. Zarrūq considered his
grandmother his first teacher. He wrote: “She taught me how to pray and ordered me to
do so since I was five years old. At the same age, she sent me to the kuttāb (Qurʿānic
school) and began to educate me about the unity of divinity, oneness of God, trust,
asceticism, Islamic belief and principles of faith through a method of inculcating
curiosity in my mind. She used to tell me anecdotes of the virtuous and righteous people.
When she told me stories, she never told me about anything except the miracles and
battles of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and wonders exposed by the devotees. She
taught me how to write and understand a book and warned me not to read poetry. She
said: “He who neglects science and deals with poetry is like a man who exchanges wheat
for barley (Zarrūq, 1980, 14-15).” She encouraged Zarrūq to acquire technical and
professional education. She used to say: “Knowledge is necessary for religion and
technical education is important for life. Surely, you must learn the Qurʿān for your
religion and learn a profession for your livelihood.” Zarrūq got technical education also
on every Thursday, Friday and Sunday and he served as apprentice to a cobbler (Zarrūq,
1980, 15).

II. Zarrūq’s Early Education
According to his biographers, Zarrūq had memorized all sections of the Qurʿān
completely at the age of ten. By this age, his guardian and patron grandmother had died
and he may be had to face difficulties in his practical life. It is not clear, who became his
guardian and what was his activities after the death of his grandmother. However,
according to al-Timbukti, he devoted himself to religious learning by the age of sixteen
(1980, 84). There were more than two hundred Madrasah Awwalliyah (grammar schools)
and two main educational institutions in Fez: the Jāmiʿat al-Qarawīyīn and the
Madrasah ʿInāniyah (Africanus, 1896, 456/2; Guennoun, 1950, 6). He joined both
institutions where he got the chance to learn from the eminent scholars of the time. He
was already familiar with some of them, since his childhood. Zarrūq himself writes:
“Allāh transferred me to a life of study and learning at the age of sixteen. So I studied
al-Risālah of al-Sāḥīn under the guidance of ʿAlī al-Sāṭī and ʿAbd Allāh al-Fakhkhār
and Qurʿānic studies and method of research and argumentation from a group of eminent
scholars. Among them, there were al-Qūrī, and al-Zarhūnī who were very pious men; al-Majūṣī and Ustād al-Ṣagḥayr ‘Abd Allāh al-Tujibī (d. 887/1482) who was expert of Nāfīʾ version of recitation. Then I indulged myself in the studies of Sufism, scholasticism and theology. I learned al-Risālah al-Qudsīyah of al-Ghazālī and al-ʿAqāʾīd of al-Ṭūsī from al-Shaykh ʿAbd Raḥmān al-Majdūlī who was one of the students of al-Ubayy. Then I studied some part of al-Tanwīr of Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iṣkandārī and most of the parts of Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and al-Ahkām al-Ṣughrā of ‘Abd al-Haqq and al-Ḥāmid of al-Tirmidhī from al-Qūrī whilst I accompanied lots of distinguished, blessed learned men, and many jurists and ascetics (al-Timbukti, 1980, 84, 85).”

III- Zarrūq’s Relations with his Shaykhs:
Zarrūq learned from many scholars as his biographers mention. However, he primarily got inspiration and motivation from two teachers:
1. Al-Shaykh Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Qūrī
2. Al-Shaykh Muḥammad al-Zaytūnī

Al-Qūrī
Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Lakhmī al-Miknāsī al-Qūrī (d. 872/1467) was from al-Qūrī, a city near Ashbāliyah, Andalus and settled at Fez. He was muftī of Fez and teacher in Jamiʿ al-Qarawīyīn. He was authority in Mālikī jurisprudence (al-Sakhwī, 1966, 280/8; al-Timbukti, 1980, 318, 319; Ibn al-Qūdī, 2002, 279/1; al-Makhluq, 2007, 261/1). He was also representative of a sort of “Juridical sainthood” in Fez. He taught his students traditional education such as hadīth, Islamic Jurisprudence as well as the basic teaching of juridical Sūfīs. He taught Kitāb al-Tanwīr fi Isqāṭ al-Tadbīr (The Book of Illumination on the Rejection of Self-direction) of Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iṣkandārī which is considered a reference book in Shāhidiyyah order (al-Timbukti, 1980, 85). Zarrūq was very much impressed by the books of Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh. He composed up to twenty commentaries upon Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh’s al-Hikam (The Book of Wisdom Sayings) (al-Timbukti, 1980, 85). Zarrūq’s involvement in Shāhidiyyah literature grew rapidly) and al-Qūrī was the first motivator of Zarrūq’s intellectual thought.

Al-Zaytūnī
Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Zaytūnī (d. 871/1465) was the head of the Zāwiyah Bū al-Quṭūt at Fez. He was blind, of dark complexion and famous for his supernatural
powers and miracles. According to all reports, he was very much respected and venerated amongst the people because of his forceful personality. Ibn ‘Askar reveals several stories and miracles about him (1976, 71-72). Al-Zaytūnī’s Ṣūfī lineage is not clear. Khushaim writes: “Al-Zaytūnī was a Ṣūfī who, it is said, followed the Shādhilū order and perhaps he was the head of a zāwiyah at that time in Fez (1975, 14).” Zaineb Istarabadi thinks of him as a qādirī (1988, 20) and Kugle has a long discussion in which he argues that the Zāwiyah Bū al-Qutūt was the main centre of the qādirī community at that time in Fez and Zaytūnī was the Ṣūfī master who ran the institution (2006, 70, 78). Vincent J. Cornell writes: “Zāwiyah Bū al-Qutūt had long been linked to the way of Abū Madyan. It was originally built by Abū al-Hasan Ibn Ghālib (d. 568/1172-3), an Andalusian hadith scholar and disciple of Ibn ‘Arif who taught Abū Madyan the Sunan of Tirmidhī (Cornell, 1998, 236-237, 384).” Zarrūq spent some time in the Zāwiyah Bū al-Qutūt as a humble disciple of al-Zaytūnī in 870/1465 and he participated in the pilgrimage to the tomb of al-Shaykh Abū Ṭālib al-Ṭabarī (d. 594/1198) at the end of this year (Zarrūq, 1980, 27-28). Zarrūq’s association with al-Zaytūnī was very deep. He was delighted that he was benefiting from him (Zarrūq, 1980, 26).”

This was the time when Fez was in chaos and turmoil. There was revolt against the Ṣultān Abū al-Haq in 869/1465 when he was away from Fez and his Jewish minister Shāhīl b. Baṭash had insulted a shahīdāh. When this incident came to the attention of the khatib of the Qarawiyīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muhammad al-Wirīghalī, he called the people to jihād against the infidel (Garcia-Arenal, 1978, 46). Zarrūq was against this revolt and the killings of Jews. He ceased praying behind al-Wirīghalī and said: “I do not trust my prayers to a ghandūr, they would be spoiled (al-Nāṣīrī, 1959, 100/4).” A ghandūr in the language of Maghrib, is a man full of passion and pride. Mercedes Garcia-Arenal writes: “In the fifteenth century it also meant rebel, mutinous and was applied to those in revolt or war against the government (Garcia-Arenal, 1978, 55).”

On the other hand, al-Zaytūnī was considered one of the leading figures who endorsed the notion of al-Wirīghalī and supported the revolt against the Ṣultān Abū al-Haq in the favour of the shahīdāh. Al-Zaytūnī told Zarrūq some secrets about the Sultan. Zarrūq alluded in his autobiography: “He told me a secret and asked me to keep it as a secret. I kept it but he charged me with betrayal of secret. I swore by every oath that I never did it but he did not accept any protestations of innocence. I neither dared to accuse him of lying nor could I accept his allegation for what I know of myself (Zarrūq, 1980, 28).” Zarrūq was very dissatisfied with the situation and desperate for amelioration. He set off to visit of the tomb of Abū Madyan (d. 594/1198) to get satisfaction and inspiration. He considered al-Zaytūnī’s anger a test of his faith. When he returned from his journey, he went to al-Zaytūnī who was seriously ill. He writes: “God blessed him with good health on my arrival but after few days he passed away (Zarrūq, 1980, 37).” Contrary to the Zarrūq’s own account, however, Ibn ‘Askar records that Zarrūq left Fez to save himself

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6 Abū Ya‘zāz Yalannār b. Maymūn (d. 572/1176) was a Moroccan Ṣūfī shaykh. He was a student of Abū Shu‘ayb al-Sāriyāh and the master of Shaykh Abū Madyan (d. 594/1198). (al-Sha‘rānī, n.d. 117-118/1).

7 Khushaim also notes that the word ghandūr has also meaning of rebel (Zarrūq, 1980, 48).
from the wrath of al-Zaytūnī because the relations between the shaykh and the disciple were very intense (1976, 49, 50).

There is a scarcity of information about the date of Zarrūq’s departure from Fez to East and the date of his first arrival at Cairo. According to Kugle, Zarrūq left Fez after 870 A.H. (1465-66 C.E.) (2006, 117). Khushaim asserts that he remained in Fez until 873 A.H. (1468-69 C.E) (1975, 17) but he did not provide textual or historical evidence to his claim. It is difficult to determine the exact date of departure on the basis of available sources, however the nearest date of his departure can be assumed from the available information from his autobiography. He made a pilgrimage to the tomb of al-Shaykh Abū Ya‘zā‘ in the company of al-Zaytūnī at the end of 870 A.H. In the same year, after the revolt against Sultan ‘Abd al-Haqq, due to the misunderstanding between Zarrūq and his Shaykh al-Zaytūnī, he left Fez to visit the tomb of Abū al-Madyan. He spent forty days in that journey. Then he came back to Fez and reconciled with al-Zaytūnī. He writes: God blessed him with health on my arrival but after some days he died, presumably at the beginning of 871 A.H.

Secondly, Zarrūq took permission for his travel to the East from Hasan al-Ghumārī who was his teacher in Tilimsān which indicates that he left Fez after the death of al-Qūrī (d. 872/1467). Otherwise he would have taken permission from al-Qūrī instead of al-Ghambarī because al-Qūrī was his principal teacher in Fez. According to this information, it could be concluded that Zarrūq left Fez after the death of al-Qūrī in 872 A.H. and stayed some time in Tilimsān and then set off to Cairo.

Thirdly, Zarrūq clearly recorded that he reconciled with his Shaykh al-Zaytūnī. He was at Fez at the time of his death. Therefore the verdict of Ibn ‘Askar that Zarrūq left Fez because of the wrath of Zaytūnī and al-Ḥadrāmī saved him from his curse is fabricated and baseless. Khushaim, Idrīs ‘Azūzī and Istrabadi rejected Ibn ‘Askar’s point of view. Interestingly, Kugle validates Ibn ‘Askar’s account and painted Zarrūq as a rebel against the demeanour of his contemporary Moroccan scholars in his book: Rebel between Spirit and Law: Ahmad Zarruq. Sainthood and Authority in Islam. On the basis of above-said discussion, Kugle’s verdict should be evaluated carefully.

IV. Zarrūq’s Departure to the East
Zarrūq had successfully completed his higher education at Fez. Fez was passing through a problematic political phase at that time. Naturally all institutions of the state and were affected. Meanwhile Zarrūq’s mentors Muḥammad al-Zaytūnī (d. 871/1466) and ‘Abd Allāh al-Qūrī (d. 872/1467) passed away. In this situation, Zarrūq decided to go to the East for advanced learning and to perform the pilgrimage. He set out on his journey to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, passing through Cairo in 873/1468. He stayed at Cairo for a certain time and met many scholars and renowned Sūfis. He tells us: “I met al-Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn al-Tanāsī in Cairo and participated in his lectures and studied some books under his supervision. He had a great command of knowledge and language and possessed great qualities. He died in 875/1470 whilst I was in the Hijāz (Zarrūq, 1980, 38).”
The holy cities were the centres of intellectual activity and meeting points for students and scholars from all over the Muslim world. Zarrūq first completed the rites and rituals of ḥajj and then headed to Medina, where he remained for over a year. At Medina he met with many scholars and Sūfis. He gave some information of his activities at Ḥijāz in his autobiography. He studied Islamic jurisprudence from Abū al-Hasan ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh, Nūr al-Dīn al-Sanhūrī (d. 889/1484). Makhlūf writes about al-Sanhūrī: “He was the leader of Mālikī school of law in his time (al-Makhlūf, 1930, 258).” Zarrūq wrote that al-Sanhūrī was a scholar of Jurisprudence, expert of grammar and theology. He composed two commentaries: one on al-Ajrūmīyah [in nahu] and second one was on al-Mukhtasar [of Khalīl in fiqḥ]. Zarrūq studied from him some chapters from the beginning to sujūd al-tilāwah in 875 A.H.- (1475 C.E) (Zarrūq, 1980, 38; Zirikli, 1969, 122/5; al-Sakhāwī, 1966, 254/5).

Zarrūq returned to Cairo in 875/1470 and settled there for about one year (al-Sakhāwī, 1966, 222/1). Cairo was the centre of Islamic sciences at that time. After the invasion of the Mongols, Cairo had become the centre of Islamic learning and al-Azhar University was the main source of knowledge and training in the Islamic sciences (Ibn Battītāh, 1987, 63-64). In this appropriate atmosphere for learning, he met prominent scholars of Arabic and Islamic Studies and Sūfī masters of his age. Three of them are the most important: Shams al-Dīn al-Jawjārī (d. 896/1490-1), Muhammad al-Sakhāwī (d. 913/1507) and Ahmad b. ‘Uqbah al-Hadramī (d. 895/1490). The first two were masters in religious knowledge and the third one was a prominent figure in the history of African Sufism and authority in esoteric sciences.

**Al-Jawjārī and al-Sakhāwī**

Zarrūq writes in his autobiography that al-Shaykh Shams al-Dīn al-Jawjārī (d. 896- 1490-91) was a Shāfi‘ī jurist, grammarian and theologian. He had a commentary on al-Shadhūr of Ibn Hishām and a commentary on al-Tanbīh. Zarrūq studied some books of al-Mahālī under his supervision (Zarrūq, al-Kunnāsh, 38). While Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497) was his contemporary expert in the hadīth from Sakhā, a village near Cairo. He composed more than one hundred books. He was the student and representative of Ibn Hajar’s school of hadīth. His commentary on Sharḥ Alīyah and al-Maġāsid al-Husnā are considered very important in the field of hadīth and his distinctive work in history is his book al-Daw al-Lāmi‘ī fi A’yān al-Qara al-Tāsī (al-Hanbali, 1966, 15-17; Zirikli, 1969, 67, 68/7). It is also a fundamental source of Zarrūq’s biography. Al-Sakhāwī cited Zarrūq in this book. He wrote that Zarrūq travelled to Egypt and then he went to the Ḥijāz to perform the pilgrimage. He resided at Medina for a period of time. Then he settled in Cairo for about one year and learned Arabic and theology constantly from al-Jawjārī and others. He red Bulugh al-Marām of Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1448) and comprehended its terminologies under my supervision. He accompanied me in certain things and I benefited from a group of his fellow countrymen (Al-Sakhāwī, 1966, 222/1; Khushaim, 1975, 19).

**Ahmad al-Hadramī**

Zarrūq’s journey to the East was a search of knowledge. He consulted the distinguished scholars of tasāfīr, hadīth and fiqḥ for esoteric sciences and his thirst for esoteric knowledge brought him to a Yemenī Shaykh al-Hadramī. Soon Zarrūq became a close
disciple of al-Hadrami, receiving his spiritual authority of initiation from him. Sakhawi’s remarks are a crucial source: “Then he was mostly influenced by Sufism (1966, 222/1).” Shihab al-Din Ahmad b. `Abd al-Qadir b. Muhammad b. `Umar b. `Uqbah al-Hadrami (895/1489) was from Hadramut and settled at Cairo. He was the leader of the Shadhili community in Cairo. He took initiation from Yahya b. al-Wafai al-Qadir (al-Kuhin, 1928, 119) However Khushaim describes him as having a multi-lineage of Qadiriyah and Shadhiliyah orders and Zarruq was initiated by him as a Qadiri-Shadhili slih (1975, 21). Al-Hadrami had a very good relationship with the religious scholars of Cairo and they often visited each other. He believed that without the integration of shari`ah and tariqah, no one can achieve the truth. He was one of those Sufis who aimed for the fusion of esoteric and exoteric sciences. Al-Sakhawi records: “He is someone in whom many people believe and on whom many people rely (1966, 222/1).” Al-Timbuktii calls him: “The axis (qutb) Abub Abdas Ahmad b. Uqbah al-Hadrami (1980, 85).” Al-Kuhin says: “He (may God be pleased with him) was a unifier of sacred law with truth, and he was one of those who had extraordinary powers, and he was ghawth of his age (1928, 119).”

Zarruq lived in the company of his shaykh during his stay at Cairo. A close relationship developed between them. Al-Hadrami focused all his attention on the learning of young Zarruq, teaching him how to unify different branches of knowledge and how one can trace a unity within the diversity of sciences. Idris Azzzi is of opinion that al-Hadrami was unimpressed with the people of Cairo and he desired to spread his order outside Egypt (Azzzi (ed.), 1998, 62) Later his aspirants Ahmad Zarruq and al-Khasasi from the Maghrib performed this function, possibly on the orders of their Shaykh al-Hadrami. Al-Hadrami was also the author of some books, Zarruq cited some references from his book Shudur al-Marakib wa-Nayl al-Maraghib. Zarruq records his sayings and letters in his book Manaqib al-`Hadrami which describes his ideas and thought (Azzzi (ed.), 1998, 368, 505).

V. Zarruq’s Return to the Maghrib
Al-Hadrami was very keen to establish his order outside Egypt, and he urged Zarruq to go back to the Maghrib and introduce his thoughts there. He obviously considered it a very suitable place for the introduction of tariqah. Once he said to him: “The soil of the Maghrib is good. If you return to it, your hearts will be good too.” When he was asked: “Why have the messengers been sent to the East and not to the West?” His answer was: “Because the doctor does not go except where there is a sick man (Azzzi (ed.) 1998, 62).” Once Zarruq visited him with the group of his countrymen, the first words the shaykh uttered were: “Leave this city. Verily it extinguishes the light of faith. It is necessary for the man who enters it to leave it in order to renew his belief (al-Munawi, 1994, 100/3).” Zarruq set out at the end of 877/1473 to his homeland on the advice of his Shaykh al-Hadrami in the company of his friend al-Khasasi. During this journey, he stayed in different cities on the Mediterranean coast, consulting distinguished scholars there. The voyage took approximately two years.

His first stay was at Tripoli where he met Abub `Abbas Ahmad b. `Abd al-Rahman al-Yaziti, known as Halilu (d. 875/1470). He was qadi of Tripoli and regarded as one of the leading jurists of the Maliki school of thought. Makhluuf remarks that he was inam of the highest rank, a good researcher and author of several books. He served as wali of
Tripoli and composed two commentaries of *al-Mukhtar* of Khalîl, and two commentaries of *Uṣūl Ibn al-Sûbî*, and *Sharh al-’Aqâ’id al-Risâlat wa-al-Ishârât* of al-Bâjî, and an abridged of *al-Nawâzîl* of al- Barzûlî (1930, 259, 260). Zarrûq also studied here with Ahmad b. Yûnis al-Tûnsî (d. 878/1473) who was an expert in jurisprudence. (al-Sakhâwî, [1966], 287/6; al-Makhîfûf, 1930, 259, 260). Zarrûq resided at Tripoli for one year. Next year he went to Tunis and studied with the renowned scholar of Tunis Muḥammad b. Qâsim al-Raṣâl al-Tûnsî (d. 894/1488). (al-Sakhâwî, [1966], 287/6). After staying there some time, he moved to Bījâyah and lived there, studying and compiling books. He studied here under the supervision of Abû al-Ḥasan al-Qalîdî (d. 891/1486-87). He was known for his proficiency in *fiqh*, *ḥadîth* and Sufism (al-Kattânî, [1928], 314/3).

Zarrûq had a continuous correspondence with al-Ḥadramî throughout the journey. Historians have recorded some letters of al-Ḥadramî which were sent to Zarrûq, his friend al-Khaṣṣâṣî and other disciples of this region. Zarrûq was at home in the years 879-880/1474-1475. Now he was himself a famous scholar, having good relations with renowned *mashâ’ikh* of the time from North Africa to the Hijâz. The journey of seven years gave him maturity and now he was in the position to introduce his reform programme among his countrymen. But because of his strict commitment with his notion of the unification of *sharî’ah* and *tarîqah*, and his harsh criticism of the incorrect attitude of jurists and the false claims of the saints, he could not gain scholarly support in Fez. Guennoun reveals that the scholars of his time referred him as a *muhâsib al-’ulâmâ’ wa-al-awliyâ’* means ‘monitor of scholars and saints’ because of this strict behaviour in religious matters (1950, 13).

Ibn ‘Askar records an event which shows the nature of conflict and discontent between Zarrûq and the jurists of Fez. He said that the judge and jurist Abû Ḥabîl al-Karrâsî al-Andalusî narrated to me: “When Zarrûq arrived from the East, the jurists went out to meet him, and I was also with them. Then we welcomed him and took a seat in his tent. He began to ask the jurists about their source of income. Some of them answered him: ‘Our livelihood comes mostly from the endowment of the graves of the dead (awqâf al-maḥbûsât).’ Shaykh said: ‘There are no means and no power except by Allâh; you are eating from the flesh of carrion’. Then jurist Ibn Ḥabbâk said: ‘Sir, all the praise to Allâh who made us hunt the dead flesh which is allowed by the sacred law by necessity, and did not make us hunt from a live flesh, which is forbidden in all circumstances’. The shaykh whimpered and fell unconscious. Then we went out, leaving him in this condition (Ibn ‘Askar, 1976, 49-50).”

Zarrûq lived at Fez for four years to fulfil the desire of his shaykh and to establish his master’s teaching in the Maghrib. He did attract a small community in Fez but most of the time he remained busy writing and composing books and commentaries. Apart from these academic and intellectual activities, in this period, he also married his first wife, Fâtîmah al-Fâsiyâh, who latter became the mother of his two sons: Ahmad al-Akbar and

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9 Zarrûq recorded many letters of al-Ḥadramî which he received during his journey in his book *Manâqib al-Ḥadramî*. 
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Ahmad al-Asghar (al-ʿAyyāshī, 1977, 98/1). He settled in Fez but, by all accounts, he was not satisfied there. So he decided to migrate somewhere else where he would get better opportunities to disseminate his message.

VI- Migration from Fez to Miṣrāṭah:
He left Fez in 884/1479 and stayed for a short period in Bijāyah in what is now Algeria. Then he headed to Cairo at the end of this year to visit his teacher al-Hadramī for consultation and counselling because this migration was against the wishes of his shaykh (Guennoun, 1950, 18). During this time he lived in Cairo and the Hijāz for more than one year. Then he settled in Miṣrāṭah, a flourishing town near Tripoli, in 886/1481. Miṣrāṭah was very calm and peaceful and Zarrūq implies, its inhabitants were relatively naive compared with those of the larger cities (Africanus, 1896, 775/3; al-ʿAyyāshī, 1977, 98/1).

By all accounts, Zarrūq was the popular amongst the people of Miṣrāṭah. They loved him and consulted him regarding their problems and their religious enquiries. Zarrūq was also happy there, and married a local woman, Amat al-Jalīl. Zarrūq had two sons: Ahmad Abū Fath and Ahmad Abū al-Faḍl and one daughter: ʿĀʾishah (al-ʿAyyāshī, 1977, 98/1; Ibn Baḥṭūṭah, 1987, 36). He clearly found this place agreeable and he settled there for the rest of his life. In time a group of scholars and disciples gathered around him from across the Muslim world for guidance and inspiration and later they established the Zarrūqīyah order.

Zarrūq left Miṣrāṭah twice more: once he had to go for a short journey to al-Jazāʿir (Algeria) in 891/1486 to bring his family from there and once to the Hijāz to perform hajj in 894/1489 (ʿAzzūzī (ed.), 1998, 71). On his return, he stayed in Cairo for a short time. Now Zarrūq was well-known as an established authority in the Islamic sciences and a distinguished Sūfī master. The scholars and princes of Egypt gave him a very warm welcome. He delivered extensive lectures at al-Azhar. Al-Kūhīn notes: “When Zarrūq arrived at Egypt, the scholars and distinguished peoples welcomed him and gathered around him and six thousand people attended his lectures at al-Azhar al-Sharif from Cairo and its suburbs. They handed him the leadership of the Māliki school of law and he became the leader of their school. A chair was established for him, and he used to sit there to deliver his lectures. That chair still exists in the riwaq al-maghibīyah (living quarters of the students of the Maghrib) at al-Azhar al-Sharif. Zarrūq had a great influence on the royal family and had acceptance and popularity amongst the masses and the notables (al-Kūhīn, 1928, 19-20). His shaykh, the famous jurist and traditionalist al-Sakhawī noticed his acceptance among the people and he recorded: “He had a group of followers and devotees ([1966], 222/1).”

Khushaim writes: “At any rate, it is quite possible that the shaykh while lecturing at al-Azhar, mainly on jurisprudence, was in touch with many Sūfī adherents whom he initiated in Cairo. Among the famous Egyptians said to have studied under his supervision or to have been initiated by him we know of: ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī

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VII. Conclusion:
Following a careful appraisal of the various biographies and historical accounts dealing with Fez and the scholars of Morocco, I have attempted to construct an authentic biography of Zarrūq. In the course of this investigation, I have weighed the conflicting reports about Zarrūq’s relationship with his contemporaries. It is my conclusion that the story told by Ibn Aksar about Zarrūq having left Fez as a result of hostile relations with his master, Shaykh al-Zaytūnī, was a fabrication. In point of fact, both of Zarrūq’s masters (al-Zaytūnī and al-Qūrī) had already died by the time he departed from Fez. I contend that the scholar journeyed east to Cairo in order to perfect his studies and not because of any antagonism towards his colleagues in Morocco. I strongly disagree with Kugle’s conclusion, based upon Ibn Askar’s account, that Zarrūq was a rebel whose relations with his Moroccan contemporaries were unfriendly. My paper should provide a fresh assessment of Zarrūq’s choice to leave Fez, placing his actions within a coherent biographical context.

References:


