Zarrūq on Reprehensible Innovations, Legal Dispensations and Creative Interpretations: A Critic of Antinomian Trends

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Abstract
Sufism has been subjected to criticism by Islamic traditionist and shari‘ah-oriented scholars, primarily because of its antinomian trends but also due to certain rituals it espouses. Ahmad Zarrūq (d. 899/1493) was first and foremost a Sufi of the Shādhilīyah Order of North Africa, but he criticised those Sufi rituals and thoughts which were contradictory to exoteric Islamic standards. He was a reformer whose criticism was directed towards restoring the orthodoxy of Sufism. This paper aims to present and evaluate Zarrūq’s critique of reprehensible innovations, legal dispensations, Sufi rituals and creative interpretations in the Sufi milieu.

Keywords: Ahmad Zarrūq; the Shādhilīyah; North African Sufism; Sufi rituals; antinomian trends.

I. Introduction
Zarrūq is a reformer of Sufi thought from within. Therefore his criticism is different from the critics from without. All anti-Sufi movements of late medieval or contemporary ages oppose Sufism, its doctrine and rituals because these critics consider Sufism against the spirit of Islam (cf. Ibn al-Jawzī, 1985; Sirriyeh, 1999; Ernst, 1997). On the other hand Zarrūq is a Sufi who criticises Sufi practices to preserve the authenticity of Sufism. Zarrūq believes that Sufism is the surest way to understand reality, because it is based on following the best (ittibā‘ al-aḥsan) of everything and he prefers Sufism over all other disciplines of Islamic sciences (Zarrūq, 2010, 60/2). According to him, to follow Sufism is the best way, and therefore the Sufi’s approach is more specific than that of the traditionalist, exegete, theologian and jurist and the Sufi’s perception is more profound than all other experts of the different disciplines. As jurist attempts to eradicate hardship and a Sufi aims to attain perfection. A theologian endeavours to correct the belief and a Sufi attempts to strengthen faith with conviction. The expert of exegesis and the traditionalist explain the rule and its meaning and Sufi goes beyond this, but only after acknowledging their interpretations. If he did not acknowledge them, he would be a bātimī (esoteric) who has abandoned the sacred law, rather than a Sufism (Zarrūq, 2010, 58/2).

Many religious innovations were popular in the Sufi circles at the time of Zarrūq. Africanus records reprehensible practices and innovation of Sufis of that time and how the popular Sufi cults were ignorant of the basic Islamic sciences and engaged in heresies and deviations. Zarrūq observes all these trends of reprehensible innovation and false claims of the Sufis, and criticizes them in his writings. The present study endeavours to
understand Zarrūq's standpoint, as presented in his magnum opus *Qawā'id al-Taṣawwūf*, regarding the reprehensible innovations, legal dispensations and antinomian trends.

II. Zarrūq's criticism of Reprehensible Innovations, Legal Dispensations and Antinomian Trends

Zarrūq devoted a reasonable portion to this topic in his book *Qawā'id al-Taṣawwūf* by devising different principles. He states how to evaluate the legality of a matter which is not described in the Qurʿán and *sunnah* clearly. According to him, “causes of worth are construed from the immediate evidence (*wujūh al-istiḥqāq mustafādah min shāhid al-ḥāl*). Sometimes if there is a doubt in a subject then caution is the best way.” Then he explains the difference of opinion among Sufi masters about the eligibility of the seeker. Some of them permit speaking to common people about Sufi matters whereas others prohibit it. He refers the remarks of Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 273/896): “After two hundred years, if anyone has something of our teachings, he must bury it because asceticism remains only in the discussion of the people and their God is their stomachs.” Sahl records many things which indicate the corruption of the discipline therefore its dissemination will be prohibited because of its misinterpretation, and its teacher will be like a man who sells a sword to a robber. Zarrūq argues that this is the position of many people of this time. They have utilized the knowledge of subtle realities and truth for worldly purpose by cheating the hearts of common folk, taking the wealth of the exploited, and disgracing the poor people. They have practised prohibited acts and evident innovations. Some of them have left the religion altogether, even though many ignorant and uneducated people accept their claims of heredity and privilege (Zarrūq, 2010, 14/2).

Zarrūq condemns all those people who claim hereditary authority without seeking proper knowledge. He criticises the so-called Sufis who deceive laymen by their tricks and lead them astray. Zarrūq stresses that it is the responsibility of the disciple to understand the limitations of knowledge and differentiate the *sunnah* from *bid'ah* in all states (Zarrūq, 2010, 16/2). He cites the advice of Ibn ʿAbbād (d. 792/1379), “Do not seek this knowledge (Sufism) from any proud, innovator (*sāhib bid'ah*) and blind follower (*muqallad*).” Zarrūq says that because a proud and arrogant person ceases to understand the signs (*āyāt*) and moral lessons while his involvement in the reprehensible innovation causes great afflictions (*al-balāyād*) and difficulties. Moreover, the blind following prevents one from achieving his aim and success.” He further argues that the Sufis should try to win the goodwill of exoterists towards the esoterists rather than to counter them, because esotericism that negates exotericism is invalid as the truth is knotted with *shariʿah* (Zarrūq, 2010, 26-27/2).

Zarrūq composed a book *al-Raʾd ʿalā ahl al-bidʿah*, explaining the meanings of reprehensible innovations, he advises his disciples to be cautious over five things. He writes that the Sufis of the time have been afflicted and tempted by five things:

1- Preferring innovation over than the *sunnah*.
2- Following the wrong people rather than the men of truth.
3- Acting on the desires of the self in all of their actions or most of their actions.
4- Seeking falsehood more than the realities.
5- Making untrue claims.

Zarrūq devises five rules of conduct to save a disciple from the wrong way:
1- Acquiring knowledge to carry out the command of God.
2- Seeking blessing and sitting in the company of masters whom God has joined with the truth.
3- Abandoning the dispensations and creative interpretations (taʾwīlāt).
4- Performing litanies regularly with presence of heart with God
5- Self-analysis in everything to save the soul from desires and to remain away from wrong doing and faults (Khushaim, 1975, 107, 181, 182).

Zarrūq supports the idea of moderation in worship. According to him, excellence in worship is accomplished by performing it rightly and regularly. This can be achieved to implement its inner and outer limitations without exaggeration and negligence. The careless person is a destroyer, and the exaggerator is an innovator, particularly if he believes that extreme behaviour in practice leads him to proximity with God. Zarrūq argues that the Devil’s whisperings (waswasah) are reprehensible innovation, and its origin is ignorance of the sunnah and a confusion in the understanding; and the consistency of remembrance of God saves a person from this. Following the legal dispensations (rukhūs) from the discretions of scholars is contrary to the sunnah. Therefore do not follow dispensations because these are mistakes (Zarrūq, 2010, 94/2).

Zarrūq defines bidʿah in a very simple and comprehensive way. He argues that introducing a rule which is not described in the sacred law is a reprehensible innovation in religion particularly if it is contradictory to legal principles. For instance, fasting as a compensation for missed night prayers (wird) is an innovation because the legislator (shārī) has not designated it, rather, he ordered to perform these prayers (ḥizb) before the morning prayers or before the end of the day. Similarly, this is the case with recitation of al-fāṭiḥah before prayers and specifying a time for the wirk prayer and the like which is not described in the clear text (nass) of the Legislator (Zarrūq, 2010, 101/2).

Zarrūq not only condemns bidʿah but also every thing which leads to the bidʿah. He argues that according to the jurists of the Shāfiʿī school of law, the recitation of litanies (ḥizb) is permissible but the Mālikīs consider them undesirable (makrūh) because there is no precedent from the practice of pious ancestors in this respect and they block pretexts (sad al-dhārīʿah) for reprehensible innovation and heresy (Zarrūq, 2010, 129/2). In another principle Zarrūq explains reprehensible innovation (bidʿah) on theological grounds. He opines that a person’s belief that an act leads to proximity with God, whereas in reality it does not do so, is an innovation. The ruling is the same for promulgating a law without precedent. All of these forms are not correct unless they refer back to a principle from which these were derived; consequently their legal rule refers to the principle. Sufi audition is not recommended (mandūb) according to those who accept it, although Sufis had a detailed discussion about it. In fact, audition is allowed due to a special consideration (rukhshah), therefore it is allowed only out of necessity and in general its provisions must be considered, if not it is prohibited (Zarrūq, 2010, 139/2). Zarrūq signifies to his disciples and adherents in Qawāʾid’s epilogue that a man who inclines towards the rukhshah and taʾwilāt will ruin himself (Zarrūq, 2010, 236/2).
Another popular innovation of the time of Zarrūq was numerology and alchemy. Africanus mentions al-Būnī (d. 622/1225) and his indulgence in numerology, and how the people of Fez were involved in treasure-hunting and alchemy (Africanus, 1896, 467-469/2). Zarrūq also observes in his autobiography how common people were indulging in these kinds of activities (Zarrūq, 1980, 31). He criticizes numerology and reveals the opinions of early Sufis in this respect. Ibn al-Bannā’ (d. 721/1312) said: “Stay away from al-Būnī and those like him and follow Khayr al-Nassāj (d. 322/934) and those like him.” [Muhīy al-Dīn Ḳarība] al-Ḥātimi (d. 638/1240) said: “The knowledge of numerology is a noble science but it is culpable not only religiously but materially also.” Zarrūq argues that numerology is not right, from a religious point of view, for man to indulge himself in the secondary causes (al-asbāb) and it goes against Trust in God. It is condemnable from the material point of view as well because it is a work which ruins the structure of economy (Zarrūq, 2010, 135/2).

Zarrūq asserts that alchemy (kīmiyāʾ), numerology (sīmiyāʾ) and astrology is prohibited because the establishment of the causes is considered basically for the sake of establishing the existence of the world. Therefore everything which is against the existence of this order in the world is denounced, or anything which happens aberrantly in existence, such as [independent “miraculous”] causes and the like. Divine consideration [for His servants] necessitates imperfection in the ends [of such endeavours], for example the poverty [attached to] alchemy, the baseness in seeking the science of numerology and an evil death for those practising astrology. All these means of income are against the wisdom of reason, opposed to the order of truth and even to the truth itself because these means attempt to establish an illusion instead of seeking the most perfect way. Moreover, final method (astrology) even seeks to spy upon the unseen kingdom of God (Zarrūq, 2010, 105-106/2).

Zarrūq confesses the effects of the words and their special characteristics. He affirms that the special effects of the words, deeds, and absolutes (al-a’yān) are confirmed. The greatest of these are the effects of the invocations (adhkār) because the remembrance of God is the best thing from all actions of a man that can save him from the punishment of God. Indeed God creates special characteristics in all things such as liquids and solids and their benefits. Every thing has its own qualities. Therefore it is necessary to consider the general rules in general conditions and a particular rule for a person who has close affinity with it according to the sacred law. Imām Mālik (d. 179/785) said about unknown things: “How do you know? That might be [the words of] infidelity.” Zarrūq writes: “I have seen those who prayed using blasphemous words (Zarrūq, 2010, 112/2).”

Zarrūq criticizes the ecstatic utterance (shatabāt) of the Sufis. He asserts that a person in rapture and ecstasy (al-wājīd) is excused because he is in a state where he cannot hold himself. The rules applicable to an insane person should be applied to him in this state and his actions should not be considered. Rulings are to be abandoned concerning him in this state, and it is obligatory for him to make compensation for unperformed obligations. He is just like a drunkard because of the common legal prescriptions. The validity of emulation of his actions is to be abandoned such as the ecstatic action of al-Nūrī (d. 295/907-08) when he preferred to be executed before his
fellows. His action is due to altruism; or it is a means to commit suicide. Similarly the state of Abū Hamzah (d. 269-882) in the well and he was brought out from it when he was near to death, and the state of Shiblī (d. 334/946), when he shaved off his beard and threw away his money into the sea when he realized his tightfistedness and their other actions which apparently seem incompatible with the sacred law but they performed these when they were overcome with ecstasy, as apparent from their stories, and thus they are treated under the rule of insanity. Dancing and the like also fall under this rule (Zarrūq, 2010, 148-149/2).

Zarrūq criticises the heresies of the Sufis but he is very careful not to pass judgement on the early masters of the Path. Zarrūq accommodates the critics of Sufis to some extent. He makes his readers aware of the books of the critics, as well as those of Sufi masters, and defends them by interpreting their ideas. Ibn Jawzī (d. 598/1201) is an ardent critic of Sufi thought and practices as evident in his books. Zarrūq analyses the criticism of Ibn al-Jawzī and others like him. He opines that refutation of matter is either based upon independent judgement or to block potential means of wrongdoing or because of lack of research or lack of understanding or lack of knowledge or lack of awareness of the subject matter or an ambiguity of the perception or an existence of obstinacy. So all of these are marked by their reference to the Truth when making a judgment, except the last one, because he (obstinately) does not accept what is evident nor is there equity and fairness in his point of view and his claim can be rationalized and validated.” By explaining this rule, Zarrūq writes that the warning of Abū Hayyān (d. 745/1344) in his books Nahr and Bahr and Ibn al-Jawzī in his Ţalbīs is to prevent the people from the misdeeds of so-called Sufis. Their writings are based on their independent judgement. In fact the criticism of Ibn al-Jawzī of the Sufis and their repudiation shows that he aimed to block the means leading to wrongdoing (Zarrūq, 2010, 218/2).

Zarrūq believes that the exaggeration in the criticism of the Sufis, placed Ibn al-Jawzī in a precarious situation. Thus, the leading sages renounced him and rejected his ideas, otherwise his book is very valuable in describing the causes of errors and inaccuracies, and leads the reader to the sunnah in an excellent way (Zarrūq, 2010, 219/2). Zarrūq does not limit his observation to ambiguous critics of the Sufis; he also censures the writings of classical Sufis which are ambiguous and vague. He writes:

The good counsellors have advised the vigilance from the Ťalbīs of Ibn al-Jawzī, Futuḥāt and all books of al-Hātimī or at least most of their parts, and the books of Ibn Saḥīn, Ibn al-Fārūq, Ibn Abīl, Ibn Dhi Sīkīn, al-‘Affī al-Tālimsānī, al-Ayyūkī al-‘Ajmī, al-Aśwād al-Aqtā‘. Abū Ishāq al-Tujibī, al-Shushṭārī and some parts of al-Iḥyā‘ of al-Ghazālī most of which are in the vices (muḥlīkāt) [section], and his al-ʾNaḵkh wa-al-Tawwāyah and al-Maḍīnīn bihi ʾalā Ghayr Aḥlībī and Miṣrāj al-Sālikīn and al-Munjīd, and some parts of Qūl al-Qulīb of Abū Talīb al-Makki and books of al-Suhrawardi and the like. Therefore caution towards sources of error is necessary but not avoidance of the whole [work] (Zarrūq, 2010, 221-222/2).

As already mentioned, Zarrūq disparages numerology and considers it harmful not only on the basis of religion but also on grounds of common sense and worldly life. Zarrūq advises the reader to stay away from those Sufis who are busy in this kind of activities and explains the opinion of Muḥyī Dīn Ibn al-ʾArabī and other Sufis about its impermissible status. He states that Ibn al-Bannā‘ said: “Stay away from al-Būnī and
those like him and follow Khayr al-Nassāj and those like him (Zarrūq, 2010, 134/2).”
Ironically, on the other hand he affirms the sainthood of al-Būnī and writes: “There is a
Sufism for the cosmologist, as al-Būnī has elaborated in his Asrūr (Zarrūq, 2010, 61/2).”

Similarly in another place, he condemns the usage of invocations and devotions
for worldly affairs such as the recitation of Sūrat al-Wāqi‘ah to save one from the poverty
and so on, but later he describes its advantages and holds the opinion that the recitation of
invocations for worldly purposes leads man to love recitation, which ultimately takes him
into proximity with and love of God, or at least to the blessing in the remembrance of
God. On the basis of this principle, Abū al-‘Abbās al-Būnī and others compiled their
works describing the divine names and their qualities, otherwise according to the
principle described, invocations and devotions should not be used as a means to achieve
worldly goals (Zarrūq, 2010, 133-134/2).

Zarrūq has a moderate opinion about the utterances of the Sufis during rapture and
ecstasy (al-wājīd). Although he does not accept their utterances, he defends them to some
extent. He criticizes and censures the utterances (shātaḥāt) of al-Nūrī, Abū Ḥamdah, and
al-Shiblī. He holds that the man who is in an ecstatic state is excused because he is in a
state where he cannot contain himself. The rules applicable to an insane person are to be
applied to him in this state, and his action should not be considered as described above.
Fixed rulings are to be abandoned regarding him in this state and it is obligatory on him
to make compensation for unperformed obligations. He is just like a drunkard because of
the common prescriptions in the law (Zarrūq, 2010, 148-149/2).

Zarrūq followed the footsteps of early Shādhilī masters who were cautious not to
pass any judgement about the ambiguous concepts of the Sufis, and some times they even
defended their intricacies. For instance Ibn ‘Atī Allāh (d. 709/1309) defended Muḥyī al-
Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī in his works.1 Zarrūq is very cautious to pass judgement on Ibn al-
‘Arabī and prefers silence and submission rather than to determine the position of Ibn al-
‘Arabī. He takes this point of view under the influence of his teacher Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-
Qūrī (d. 872/1467). As above mentioned, once al-Qūrī was asked about Ibn al-‘Arabī, he
replied: “Submission [of the matter to God].” Zarrūq writes: “He said this because in
declaring the apostasy of Ibn al-‘Arabī, there is a danger and his respect may lead the
listeners to follow the ambiguity and haziness of his inscriptions (Zarrūq, 2010, 93/2).”
Although he is careful not to criticise a particular Sufi master for his utterances or
innovations, he denies all kind of utterances and innovations linked to Sufi circles. He
opines that some Sufis are disastrous. They make ecstatic utterances (shātaḥāt) and
commit blasphemy and transgression according to the clear verdict of both exoteric and

1 Victor Danner notes: “The Shādhilīs were vigorous defenders of Ibn ‘Arabī’s teaching as we see in the
tumultuous confrontation between Shaykh Ibn ‘Atī Allāh and the Hanbali fundamentalist critic of the Shaykh
al-Akbar, Ibn Taṣīmīyah, in the Citadel of Cairo early in the eighth-fourteenth century. In this connection, it is
well worth remembering that the acerbic remarks made by Shaykh Ibn ‘Atī Allāh against the doctors of the
Law who restrict the meaning of the Islamic message to the level of their own comprehension really apply, first
and foremost, to the Hanbali canonist (Danner, 1991, 36).” Zarrūq himself is a strong critic of Ibn Taṣīmīyah.
He writes: Ibn Taṣīmīyah was a man who had good memory and profound knowledge but he was rejected in
terms of theological beliefs and in theosophical matters his understating was very poor and gnosis was indeed
away from him. When al-Shaykh al-Imām Taqi al-Dīn al-Subkī was asked about him, he said: “He is a man
whose knowledge is more than his mind (Zarrūq, n.d. 34).”
esoteric sciences. Therefore it is obligatory to accept [from them] only which is according to the Qur'ān and sunnah (Zarrūq, 2010, 214/2).” Zarrūq refutes the opponents of Ibn ‘Arabī and argues that his writings are for the scholars who possess knowledge to comprehend the real meaning of his works. Khushaim extracts the opinion of Zarrūq about Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī from a MS of his Sharḥ Al-Mabāḥith al-‘Asliyah.

It is noteworthy to find that while Zarrūq does not approve of some of Ibn ‘Arabī’s utterances such as his saying: “I am the Qur’ān and the Seven Repetitions” (al-sab‘ al-mathā‘ūt: the first sūrah). “I am the Spirit of the Spirit, not the spirit of the vessels (awātāt, bodies)”, and regards them as unacceptable, he defends him at the same time on the grounds that Ibn ‘Arabī did not find the proper language in which to express his state. In his Sh. al-mabāḥith al-‘asliyah (Khusaim, 1976, 148), he connects Ibn ‘Arabī and other Sufi masters, in quoting Abū Hayyān in his book al-Nahr al-mudī (al-mu‘addh min al-bahr) accusing him of being a ḥālālī (incarnationist). Zarrūq rejects this accusation and denies that either Ibn ‘Arabī or the other masters, intended to say what has been falsely understood from his utterances (Khusaim, 1976, 148).

Zarrūq has soft position on visiting to graveyards. He formulates a principle in this respect. “Whatever is clear, evident and tied to [beneficial] actions must be permissible such as visiting the graveyard.” Then he describes the arguments for the permissibility of visiting of graveyards. He cites a hadīth in this respect: “Indeed they remind us of the hereafter (Muslim, 1998, 392).”2 Then he writes that the recitation of the Qur’ān, religious invocations and personal supplications are favourable on these occasions. Zarrūq has great faith in the benefit of visiting the graves of the pious people. He argues that if one of them is sought for blessings in their lifetime, it is permitted to seek their blessings after their death. He also interprets the hadīth. “Do not set off on a journey except for the purpose of visiting one of three mosques (Muslim, 1998, 584)”3 referring to Imām al-Ghazālī’s (d. 505/1111) book Kitāb al-Safar where al-Ghazālī said: “The journey for this purpose is permissible and thus not contradictory of the hadīth: ‘Do not set off on a journey except for the purpose of visiting three mosques’ because all mosques are of equal rank except these three mosques. Whereas the scholars and pious persons differ in status and pre-eminence, travelling is allowed from one to another that is more superior (al-Ghazālī, n.d. 100/2).”

Zarrūq asserts that one’s pre-eminence is recognized by miracles, knowledge, and actions particularly one whose miracles were as evident after his death as they were in his lifetime like Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Jaʿfar al-Sibṭī (d. 601/1204), or one those miracles were manifested more during their life than after their death, like Abū Yaʿzūz (d. 572/1172), and those whose graves are known for the acceptance of the personal prayers, and there are many places of this kind in the world. Imām al-Shāfī‘ī (d. 204/820) alluded that the grave of Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799) is well-tested curing for all kinds of illness (Al-Sushshtarī, 1985-6, 553/28). Zarrūq reveals that his Shaykh Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Qūrī said: “If the showers of the blessing used to descend in the remembrance of these people, then what is your opinion about those places where they met their God, or on the day when they joined Him and left this world? That is their day of death.” It is to please them by visiting them on this day and to receive the breeze of compassions that are renewed

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2 cf. Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ, kitāb al-janā‘iz, (36) bāb istidhān al-nabī rabbahu fi ziyyārat qabr ummihī, hadīth No. 2259.
3 cf. Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ, kitāb al-ḥaṣiṣ, (95) bāb faḍl al-masājid al-thalāthah, hadīth No. 3384
upon them. Therefore it is good (mustahabb) to visit them if it is free from any prohibited or reprehensible acts under the sacred law, such as the gathering of women, and other things that usually happen at such places. It is necessary to observe proper conduct there, such as refraining from touching the grave, and one should not perform canonical prayers there for blessings even if there is a place for prayer because the Prophet (peace be upon him) prohibited and refrained from this. It is necessary to observe the respect and esteem of the person just as they were admired when they were alive (Zarrūq, 2010, 167-169/2).

Zarrūq criticises reprehensible innovations and legal dispensation and urges his disciples to understand the wisdom of sacred law. He writes that Sufis will be on the right path as long as they have differences of opinion and criticise each other. If they agree on all issues then they lose vigour in their religion. Because nobody is free from error, they cannot agree except by ignoring the faults of one another (Zarrūq, 2010, 146/2). He condemns blind imitation, and at the same time believes in the validity of the emulating the foremost leaders in religious scholarship (Zarrūq, 2010, 35/2). Because of his poignant criticism he was entitled muḥāṣib al-`ulamāʿ wa-al-ṣūfiyyā (the one who takes the scholars and Sufis to account) (Guennoun, 1950, 13).

Some admirers of Zarrūq such as `Abd Allāh Najmī compare him with Martin Luther (1483-1546) because of his revolutionary thoughts and criticism of religious innovations. Najmī devoted his research to compare the Zarrūqīan and Lutheran movements. He claims that both are religious reformers who founded movements of religious reformation in almost same era. He compares the common grounds of both movements (Mustafā, 2001, 194-195/1). However, the comparison between Zarrūq and Luther appears unrealistic. The Lutheran movement was to challenge the authority of Pope and to advocate the independence of a ruler from ecclesiastical supervision (cf. Dickens, 1967; Brecht and Schaaf, 1994). On the other hand, the Zarrūqīyah is a movement aimed at upholding tradition by eliminating innovations and wrongdoings of the Sufis and jurists. Zarrūq was a moderate reformer seeking to do so from within. His criticism, to some extend, could not produce effective results because he theoretically criticised the reprehensible innovations, ecstatic utterances and other blameworthy practices of the Sufis, but at the same time he has not only had a very soft opinion about his predecessors who clearly committed transgressions, innovations and made inappropriate utterances, but also defended them. For instance, he criticised numerology and advised his disciples to stay away from the books of al-Būnī but at the same time he claims that there is a Sufism for the cosmologist and the Asrār of al-Būnī is the best guide book in this respect (Zarrūq, 2010, 61/2). He also advocated the invocations of al-Būnī because they were based on the verses of Qurʾān (Zarrūq, 2010, 134/2).

III. Conclusion

Zarrūq’s reformatory movement was an attempt to harmonize extreme elements of opinions of the different sects of the Muslim community and create a balance between the sharīʿah and tariqah by employing the independent reasoning without deviating from the path and tradition of pious ancestors. Danner’s standpoint seems more sensible that ‘the Zarrūqīyah, no doubt, considered the balancing of Sufism and the Law as an indispensable quality in the would-be faqīh; something that he had to be aware of, or something that he had to assimilate (Danner, 1991, 41).’ Therefore it is appropriate to evaluate the teaching of Zarrūq independently without comparing it with the Lutheran or
any other movement. Similarly his criticism of antinomian trends is an effort to integrate tariqah with shari'ah and to maintain an equilibrium between spirituality and law. The present environment of harsh criticism from fundamentalist anti-Sufi reformers, combined with an unfortunate disequilibrium within the Sufi world, has prompted Sufi apologists to search for viable and positive theoretical models. Zarrūq’s reform programme may well provide the framework for a re-evaluation of Sufi thought, enabling the elimination of antinomian trends and providing an opportunity to synthesise Islamic exoteric sciences with esoteric traditions.

References


