

Zarruq's Concept of Integrated Islam

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Ahmad Zarruq was one of the most intriguing figure of 15th century Muslim scholars in the Maghrib. He was a leading jurist in Maliki school of law, traditionist in Ibn al-jar school of *hadith* and a famous Sufi in the Shadhili lineage. Integration of conflicting trends of different Islamic sciences and creating a harmony between them is one of the most ubiquitous element of his writings. The presentation of Islam in an integrated form that appealed the Muslim scholars was his most impressive achievement. Zarruq's works left a lasting impact across the Muslim world, in particular in the circles of the Shadhiliyah.¹

Ahmad Zarruq presents Islam in an integrated way and links Sufism with other branches of Islamic sciences. He attempts to merge all of the Islamic sciences into a holistic way in order to harmonise the extreme behaviours of the different sects of the Islamic community, so that the Sufis stance may be upheld. He fuses Sufi wisdom with juridical rectitude and amalgamates the mystical and spiritual teachings with theology through the medium of logic, and rational sciences so that he can attract the theologians and rational minded thinkers in favour of Sufism.

Explaining the unity of Sufism and jurisprudence, Zarruq writes: "The purity of intention is conditioned by its being gratifying to the Truth, Most-High and that He is pleased with it, and the conditioned matter is null and void without the condition. "He is not pleased with disbelief for His servants"². Thus the existence of belief is compulsory and conditioned; "If you are grateful, he is pleased by it for you"³. Consequently, actions are conditioned by submission.

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Thus Sufism is not acceptable without jurisprudence, so the esoteric rules of God could not be recognised without jurisprudence, it is likewise not acceptable without Sufism, because no action is acceptable without the purity of intention, and both are unacceptable without belief. Therefore the simultaneous existence of all these is required because of their unity in principle, such as souls which are united with the bodies, and which cannot be without them, likewise there is no life in the body without the soul. So understand this. Im[m M[lik (d. 179:785) said in this respect: “He who follows the Sufi path without a true understanding of jurisprudence is a heretic; and he who gains expertise in jurisprudence and does not follow the Sufi path is a transgressor and he who unites them, attains to Reality”⁴. I [Zarr]q] stated: “The first is a heretic because he said about the predestination (*al-jabr*) which causes the negation of wisdom and divine principles. The second is transgressor because his deeds are empty from the consideration of wisdom and divine principles which saves from the disobedience of God. His deeds also lack the purity of heart (*al-ikhlaq*) which is the basic condition in the action for God. The third realises the reality because of his upholding the reality strictly as it requires”⁵.

Zarruq is tolerant of other factions of Sufis. He holds that the difference of ways does not necessarily produce a difference of goals. Sometimes the goal is the same with different paths leading to it such as devotion (<*ib[dah]*), asceticism and gnosis, which are all ways leading to proximity with God through divine grace, and all these ways are intertwined with one another.

Thus devotion is compulsory for the gnostic; otherwise if he does not worship according to his illumination then there is no worthwhile outcome to his gnosis. Similarly he must hold asceticism; but if he does not leave all the things which go against the ruling of God then there is no reality to his asceticism. Both of these elements are necessary for the devotee because there is no devotion without true knowledge, and there is no time for devotion without asceticism. Asceticism is also, the same because there is no asceticism without true knowledge and devotion otherwise it is of no use. Certainly, a man who is dominated by religious rituals is a devotee (<*[bid]*); if the abandonment of the worldly things is the dominant element of his personality then he is an ascetic (*z[hid]*); and

if he completely absorbs himself in the understanding of the nature of Truth, then he is a gnostic (</i>), and all of them are Sufis⁶.

Zarruq acknowledges the importance of different disciplines of Islamic studies and their role in the understanding of religion, but he gives preference to Sufism and regards it as a most noble discipline. According to him, the benefit of something is that which is aimed from its substance; and its reality is its advantage either in the beginning or in end or in the both. For instance, Sufism is a science that aims to purify the heart and make it entirely faithful to God. The advantage of jurisprudence is to correct the deeds and uphold the order and elaborate the wisdom by the implementation of rules. Theology investigates statements with the arguments and enlightens the belief with strong faith. The science of medicine safeguards the body. Grammar corrects language and so like other sciences⁷.

He further elaborates this point that the knowledge of the advantage of something and its outcome inspires one to follow it and try to get it. Indeed it is right that the dignity of something is related to the dignity of its contents; and there is no noble science more than the contents related to Sufism because its origin is the fear of God that is the result of knowing Him and basis of the submission to His order and its purpose is to dedicate the hearts entirely for the Most-High. Therefore al-Junayd (d. 297/910) said: “If I know of a more venerable science than this [Sufism] under the sun, I must try to obtain it”⁸.

Zarruq repeated this notion in many places in *Qawa'id* with different method. He writes: “Jurisprudence is intended to establish a general rule and its subject is to establish an order which prevents hardships. The approach of Sufism is to find perfection, and its origin is the consciousness of the most perfect both by rule and wisdom; whilst theology is to determine prohibitions and commandments. Thus these are all based on investigation. “Each group knew their drinking-places.”⁹

Zarruq explains that the perception of Sufi in the conducts is more specific than that of the jurist because jurist evaluates a matter to prevent a hardship and Sufi deems to obtain the perfection. His perception is more specific than that of the theologian because theologian considers a matter to correct a belief and Sufi judges it to fortify the faith and certainty

(*yaq'n*). His perception is also more specific than that of exegete (*mufassir*) and the traditionalist because both of them evaluate the rule and its connotation and nothing else whereas Sufi investigates the inner meaning of the text after affirming the meaning which have been established by the traditionalists and exegete, otherwise he is mere esotericist (*b[°oin*) who is far from the sacred law and far away from the Sufis.¹⁰

Zarruq's concept of integrated Islam can be observed in the discussion above. He perceives the different disciplines of Islamic sciences in a holistic and integrated manner. He classifies Islamic faith into the traditional division of *Islam*, *Iman* and *Ihsan* and considers *ihsan* as the Sufism described above. He imagines that, although each discipline of Islamic studies has its own domain and limitations, there are certain overlapping areas among them which make them intact. He writes: "The essential elements of a discipline are deduced from its principles. It might share this with another discipline in its essential elements, and diverge from it in the methodology of its argumentation such as the difference in jurisprudence, Sufism and theology. Their fundamental principles are the Quran, *sunnah* and rational arguments which are accepted and compatible with the Quran and *sunnah* but a jurist investigates to prove an exoteric rule for an outward action as the principle rule warrants this; and the Sufi investigates from the esoteric point of view, to find out the essence of Reality. The jurist has no concern with this unless the inner and outer aspects of the matter have not been amalgamated; a theologian investigates to prove or negate a matter, and nothing else. Therefore Ahmad b. Yahya Ibn al-Jall[> (d. 306/918-19) said: "Whoever treats the Truth(*al-haqq*) and creatures (*khalq*) based upon their esoteric knowledge is a heretic; and whoever treats the Truth and creatures based upon the *shariah* is a *sunnah* and whoever treats the Truth based upon their esoteric knowledge and treats creature by the *shariah* is Sufi"¹¹.

Zarruq thinks that the devotion, gnosis, and asceticism are different spiritual states of a novice of the way, but all these states are intertwined with one another.¹² Zarruq not only integrates the different Sufi stations, but he also integrates Sufism with other branches of knowledge and strictly denies the notion that a Sufi follows no particular *madhhab*. He does not authorize the Sufis to live a life at variance with the exoteric law, but rather, he expects that Sufi should follow

jurisprudence firmly to protect himself from confusion and the misunderstanding of people. This was the way of all the classical Sufis. He writes: “The subdivision of a fundamental rule decrees the subdivision of its practical application. Therefore it is obligatory to follow a fundamental rule, which could be a reference in jurisprudence, theology and Sufism. Thus there is no truth to this notion that a Sufi has no school of jurisprudence. However he chooses one school which is the best by evidence, objective, precaution or something else which will guide him to a spiritual state; otherwise al-Junayd (d. 297!910) was a Thawri, al-Shibli (d. 334!946) was a Maliki, al-Jurayri (d. 311!923) was a hanafi, al-Muhasibi (d. 243!857) was a Shafi and all of these men were the best leaders of the Way. However, the notion that a Sufi follows the traditionalists in the pr

actical application in this sense means that he does not act upon the practical application of his school of thought unless it is according to the *na~~* (clear evidence from the Quran or *sunnah*) and it does not contradict precaution or faithfulness”¹³.

Zarruq inspires his disciples to the purification of their hearts and thinks it is obligatory for everyone. He considers people to have different mental dispositions and everyone demands special treatment for the purification of their hearts according to their particular spiritual states. There is great benefit in the different methods of training in different Sufi orders for disciples because everyone can opt for, and acquire, different inspiration according to their capacity. Zarruq writes: “The multiplicity of the feature of the good (*al-hasan*) demands the multiplicity of the *istihsan* and seeking good is the best for every one. Therefore, every sect has its path. Thus, there is Sufism for the layman that is explained in the books of al-Muhasibi. There is Sufism for the jurist; Ibn al-hajj (d.737!1336) tended to describe it in his *Madkhal*. There is Sufism for traditionist; al-Qadhi Ibn al-Arabi (d. 543!1148) described it in his *Siraj*. There is Sufism for devotee; al-Ghazali(d.505!1111) examined in the *Minhaj*. There is Sufism for a contented person (*al-mutarayyi#*); al-Qushayr\ (d. 465!1072) enlightened it in his *Ris[lah*. There is Sufism for ascetic (*n[sik*) which have been described in *al-Q]t* and *al-I+y[>*. There is Sufism for the philosopher; Ab] Bakr Mu+y\ al-D\n Mu+ammad Ibn al-<Arab\ al-[tim\ (d. 638/1240) included it in his books. There is Sufism for logician; Ibn Sab<\n (d. 669!1270) expressed it in his books. There is

Sufism for cosmologist; al-B[n] (d. 622/1225) elaborated it in his *Asr[r]*. There is Sufism for theologian; al-Sh[dhil] (d. 656/1258) focused on it in his teachings. Therefore every group has been considered according to their principles.”¹⁴

Zarr]q believes that the difference of opinion and diversity of the ways to the Truth creates ease. He believes that there is comfort and assistance for everyone who desires to achieve his aim and reach his destination in the difference among sects. There is the devotee who is affected by the virtues in all circumstances; and the worshipper who acts upon the practices strictly; and an ascetic who turns away from creation; and the gnostic who is associated with realities; and the pious who investigates the inner states of the self carefully; and the enthusiast who attaches himself to the people of path in all circumstances; and the novice who performs his duties to the best of his efforts. All of them are within the circle of Truth by upholding the rule of sacred law and avoiding every condemnable and repugnant action.¹⁵

Zarr]q approves of the diversity of Sufi orders and accepts their methods of training but he prefers the Sh[dhil]yah over all other orders. He says the teaching of this order attracts the theologian and this Sufi order adapts the theological method in Sufism to purify the hearts and illuminate them with the light of faith.¹⁶ He prefers the teaching of al-Sh[dhil] over al-Ghaz[l] by describing the *+ad\th* of Gibr[l]. He divides the spiritual station (*i+s[n]*) into two: the first station is to worship God as though you are seeing Him, and second station is to worship God as He sees you. Zarr]q writes: “The first station of virtue is for the gnostic (*<[rif]*); the second is for those who are below the rank of gnostic. The Sh[dhil]yah and those who follow their tradition are in the first of these, while al-Ghaz[l] and those who followed his tradition are amongst the second.”¹⁷ Zarr]q claims that no Sufi orders returns to one single principle, but rather to many, except for the Shādhiḥiyah for they built their way upon a single principle which is the rejection (*isq[%]*) of self-direction (*al-tadb\r*) in the face of the True (*al-+aqq*) in what He has directed of compelling (*qahriyy[t]*) and commanding orders (*amriyy[t]*). Therefore, this is the way of Unity (*taw+\d*) which should be given preference over all other orders.¹⁸

Although Zarr]q accommodates the different schools of jurisprudence, a close reading of the *Qaw[<id al-Ta~awwuf* reveals his M[lik\ leanings. Despite this clear preference, the *Qaw[<id* is much more than a work belonging to a single school of law. Similarly, the author's partiality for the Sh[dhil\ Sufi method does not preclude his firm belief that all Sufi orders have a rightful place within the Islamic fold. On theological grounds, he clearly endorses the Ash<ar\ school of thought. This viewpoint renders the *Qaw[<id* very attractive to a traditional educated *Sunn* reader, yet Zarr]q seems intent on creating a space where intense debates in the religious sciences and extreme behaviour of different sects can be evaluated in a reasonable and moderate fashion. His project of integrated Islam is valuable contribution towards the goal of Muslim unity.

ibn Mu+ammad <Umar, *Shajarat al-N]r al-Zak\yah f\ ^abaq[t al-M[lik\yah*, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaq[fah al-D\n\yah, 2007); al-Sakh[w\, Mu+ammad ibn <Abd al-Ra+man, *al-Şaw> al-L[mi< li-Ahl al-Qarn al-T[si<*, (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāh, [1966]); al-Timbukt\, A+mad B[b[, *Nayl al-Ibtih[j bi-Ta%r\z al-D\b[j, f\ -hamish Kit[b al-Dib[j al-Mudhhab*, (Bayr]t: D[r al-Kutub al-<ilm\yah, 1980); Y[q]t ibn <Abd All[h al-|amw\, *Mu<jam al-Udab[>*, (Mi~r <Isā al-Bāb\ al-|alabī, [1936-38]); Y]suf Sirkis, *Mu<jam al-Ma%b[<[t al-<Arab\yah wa-al-Mu<arrabah*, (Beirut: n.d); Zarr]q, A+amd: *al-Kunn[sh*, ed. Khushaym, <Al\ Fahm\, (Mi~r[tah, Libya: Maktabat al-Zarr]q\yah, 1980); Zirikl\, Khayr al-D\n, *al-A<l[m: Q[m]s Tar[jim li-Ashhar al-Rij[l wa-al-Nis[> min al-<Arab wa-al-Musta<rib\n wa-al-Mustashriq\n*, (Beirut: 1969).

² Q39! al-Zumar. 7

³ Q39! al-Zumar. 7

⁴ Al-Q[r\, <Al\ b. Sul%[n Mu+ammad, *Shar+ <Ayn al-<ilm wa-Zayn al-|ilm*, (Beirut: D[r I+y[> al-Turath al-<Arab\, 1st edition), vol. 1, p. 33; al-<Adw\, <Al\, |sh\yah <al[Shar+ al-Zarq[n\ <al[Matn al-<Az\yah f\ al-Fiqh al-M[lik\, vol. 3, p. 195; al-Sha<r[n\ attributed this quotation to <Al\ al-K[rz]n\, al-Sha<r[n\, <Abd al-Wahh[b, *^abaq[t al-Kubr[: wa-bi-h[mishihi Kit[b al-Anw[r al-Quds\yah f\ Bay[n al-<Ub]d\yah*, (Cairo: D[r al-Fikr al-<Arab\ n.d.), vol. 2, p. 163

⁵ Zarr]q, *Qaw[<id al-Ta~awwuf*, ed. Ghulam Shamasur-Rehman, (A Critical Edition of *Qaw[<id al-Ta~awwuf* with Introduction, PhD dissertation, IAIS, University of Exeter, 2010), Qa: 4, vol. 2, pp. 3, 4

⁶ Zarr]q, *Qaw[<id*, Qa: 10, vol. 2, pp. 8, 9

⁷ Zarr]q, *Qaw[<id*, Qa: 13, vol. 2, p. 11

⁸ al-Sarr[j, Ab] Na~r, *Kit[b al-Luma< f\ al-Ta~awwuf*, ed. Nicholson, Reynold A. (London: Luzac, 1963), p. 180; Zarr]q, *Qaw[<id*, Qa: 14, vol. 2, p. 11

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- ⁹ Q2; al-Baqarah. 60; Zarr]q, Qaw[<id, Qa: 31,
vol. 2, p. 26
- ¹⁰ Zarr]q, Qaw[<id, Qa: 55, vol. 2, p. 57
- ¹¹ Zarr]q, Qaw[<id, Qa: 32, vol. 2, p. 27
- ¹² Zarr]q, Qaw[<id, Qa: 113, vol. 2, p. 117
- ¹³ Zarr]q, Qaw[<id, Qa: 54, vol. 2, p. 56
- ¹⁴ Zarr]q, Qaw[<id, Qa: 59, vol. 2, p. 61
- ¹⁵ Zarr]q, Qaw[<id, Qa: 57, vol. 2, p. 58
- ¹⁶ Zarr]q, Qaw[<id, Qa: 59, vol. 2, pp. 59-61
- ¹⁷ Zarr]q, Qaw[<id, Qa: 56, vol. 2, pp. 57, 58
- ¹⁸ Zarr]q, Qaw[<id, Qa: 74, vol. 2, p. 79