Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions: The Nurbakhshiya Between Medieval and Modern Islam.
Columbia, South Carolina, University of South Carolina Press, 2003, xxxv + 328, plates, maps, charts, index.

Colin Mitchell

Édition électronique

URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/abstractairanica/2738>

DOI : 10.4000/abstractairanica.2738

ISSN : 1961-960X

Éditeur :

CNRS (UMR 7528 Mondes iraniens et indiens), Éditions de l'IFRI

Édition imprimée

Date de publication : 15 mai 2005

ISSN : 0240-8910

Référence électronique

Colin Mitchell, « *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions: The Nurbakhshiya Between Medieval and Modern Islam*. Columbia, South Carolina, University of South Carolina Press, 2003, xxxv + 328, plates, maps, charts, index. », *Abstracta Iranica* [En ligne], Volume 26 | 2005, document 219, mis en ligne le 08 décembre 2005, consulté le 25 septembre 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/abstractairanica/2738> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/abstractairanica.2738>

Ce document a été généré automatiquement le 25 septembre 2020.

Tous droits réservés

*Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions:
The Nurbakhshiya Between Medieval
and Modern Islam.* Columbia, South
Carolina, University of South
Carolina Press, 2003, xxxv + 328,
plates, maps, charts, index.

Colin Mitchell

- 1 Shahzad Bashir has offered here the first systematic, English-language study of the Nūrbāḥṣīyya Order. The medieval confluence of shi'ite notions of hagiography and eschatology with ṣūfī models of cosmology and cosmogony is well-represented in the Nūrbāḥṣīyya *ṭarīqa*, and it is not surprising that the 15th century doctrines of Muḥammad Nūrbāḥṣ "should be regarded as a significant paradigm for understanding the development of religious history in general" (p. xvii). This study is divided into two broad sections, with one examining the life and intellectual import of Muḥammad Nūrbāḥṣ (1392-1464), and the other detailing the evolution of the Nūrbāḥṣīyya movement as it faced numerous doctrinal, political, and ethnic challenges from the 16th century to the present. After an overview of Muslim messianic traditions in the first chapter, Bashir provides a thorough narrative in the subsequent chapter ("A Messiah's Life") of Nūrbāḥṣ's education and career from Badaḥṣān to Gīlān. Nūrbāḥṣ flourished within the Kubravi tradition, and Bashir provides convincing evidence to suggest that the movement's turn towards militancy under Ṣayḥ Kuttalānī and its suppression by the Timurid ruler Ṣāhruḥ in 1423 was due to longstanding internal rivalries and the unsettling messianic claims of Kuttalānī's designated successor, Nūrbāḥṣ himself. Nonetheless, Bashir is uncompromising in his characterization of Nūrbāḥṣ as a Mahdī claimant who, unlike previous charismatic personalities in Islamic history, eschewed a messianic agenda dependent on violence and coercion. The

underpinnings to these and other theological stances are discussed in greater detail in the third chapter, “Articulating the Messianic Message”, where Bashir flushes out and paraphrases Nūrbah̄sh’s defense of his claim to Mahdī-ship in the oft-neglected and currently unpublished work, “The Treatise on Guidance” (*Risālat al-hudā*). With an innovative understanding of *walāya* (“sainthood”) in hand, Nūrbah̄sh rejected the doctrine of the transmigration of souls (*tanāsuḥ*) and instead embraced the notion that the divine essences of prophets and imams alike could be simultaneously “projected” (*burūz*) into a designated corporeal vessel living in the future. This chapter is then followed by an orderly presentation, supplemented by helpful charts, of Nūrbah̄sh’s theosophical *Weltanschauung*, which Bashir arranges and discusses on the basis of cosmology, epistemology, methodology, and experiential concerns.

- 2 The remaining half of the book examines the diffusion of Nūrbah̄shiyya ideas and the ultimate reorientation of the movement eastwards to Ladakh and Baltistan. Chapter Five (“The Mahdi’s Successors in Iran and Anatolia”) focuses on the activities of several important Nūrbah̄shiyya disciples – such as Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad Lāhijī (d. 1506), the author of *Mafātīḥ al-i’jāz* (a celebrated commentary on the *Gulšan-i rāz*), and Qavām al-Dīn Nūrbah̄shī (d. 1537) – and their ability to weather the arrival of the Safavid shahs and their proclivity to violently assimilate or eliminate rival mystical organizations. However, by the 17th century, the Nūrbah̄shiyya had lost prominence in Iran and any formal preaching and proselytism had been pushed eastward to the Hindukush range. The reasons for this geographic shift are provided in the sixth chapter (“Hope on a New Front”) where Bashir highlights the ability of the Nūrbah̄shiyya notable Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad ‘Irāqī (d. 1526) to appreciate the ethno-religious syncretism of medieval Kashmir as well as navigate the capricious politics of the day in order to establish an impressive *ḥānqāh* at Zadibal. ‘Irāqī is clearly the most important Nūrbah̄shiyya figure after the founder himself, but Bashir is quick to point out that he rejected esoteric scholarship in favour of pragmatic guidance on ritual and liturgy: “Iraqi’s political behavior and his religious outlook constituted an effort to ‘exteriorize’ Nurbakhsh’s esoteric doctrine” (p. 241). Despite ‘Irāqī’s efforts, formal Nūrbah̄shiyya practices would soon be subsumed by the aggressive policies of Mirza Hidar Dughlat and the subsequent incorporation of Kashmir into the Mughal empire. Vestiges of the original Nūrbah̄shiyya belief systems are still evident, and it is in his last chapter (“Establishment and Survival in Baltistan and Ladakh”) that Bashir explains how this movement has mingled with and metamorphosed the predominantly Tibetan Buddhist society of Baltistan and Ladakh in the 19th and 20th centuries. Geographically situated among a competitive nexus of belief systems (sunni Islam, shi’ite Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism), this community has suffered in terms of numbers and is struggling to preserve its heritage. However, Bashir has followed closely the media reports and publishing activities of the Nūrbah̄shiyya, and suggests that they are in a process of mutual engagement and dialogue; indeed, some of the same overarching debates taking place in the “higher” Islamic traditions, namely the appeal of modernity and innovation in the face of traditionalism and adherence to authoritative norms, characterize Nūrbah̄shiyya discourse as of late.

INDEX

Thèmes : 4.2.1. Safavides et Qâjârs

Mots-clés : Nûrbaḥšīyya

nompropre Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad Lāhījī, Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad 'Irāqī

AUTEURS

COLIN MITCHELL

Dalhousie University – Halifax