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# Islam and Cultural Heritage on Tajik Television

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## Abstract

For many members of the Tajik governing elite, Muslim piety remains problematic—a stubborn, socially regressive holdover of anti-modern Tajiks—and Muslim leaders are often thought of merely as anachronistic cultural survivals. This paper interrogates the depiction of Muslim exemplars as they appear on Tajik state television by comparing a 2009 documentary about the life of Imomi Abūhanifa, the eponymous founder of the Ḥanafī school of jurisprudence, with an exposé about Ēshoni Temur, a local Naqshbandī Sufi *pir* tried and convicted in 2015 for polygyny and various indeterminate offenses against official notions of Muslim religiosity. This article considers different regimes of Muslim alterity as depicted on state media and argues that the Tajik governing elite alternately renders problematic Islam as innocuous heritage or in need of swift extermination.

## Keywords

Islam – Tajikistan – television – heritage – Sufism

## Supplementary Material

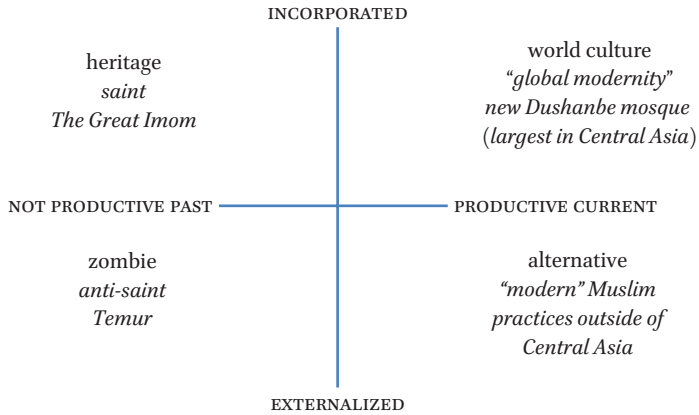


FIGURE 1 Noyes' diagram labeled with figures and practices of Islam in Tajikistan  
 SOURCE: DOROTHY NOYES, *HUMBLE THEORY: FOLKLORE'S GRASP ON SOCIAL LIFE* (BLOOMINGTON, IN: INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2016), 399.