

Source of tiling patterns by area

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1 Introduction

It has been found that users of this web site are interested in finding patterns from details of their location. To try to satisfy this need, patterns have been given a country of origin. The classification has followed that used by www.patternsinislamicart.com devised by David Wade. The reason for following this is that very many patterns have been found from David Wade's web site that therefore is a good starting position.

We are only concerned here with classical Islamic designs.

2 Analysis

There are a few obvious points to note:

1. We have no location for many patterns (even if found in well-known publications, such as [1]).
2. Many patterns are found very widely and therefore appear in many countries. For an example see [Bourgoin, Plate 16, top left](#).
3. Modern country boundaries are used which actually mean little for the classical Islamic designs.

The issue of assigning a country of origin is not always straightforward and sometimes involves making some arbitrary decisions. We list some of the issues below.

Areas used. These are in alphabetical order:

Central Asia. This area could be called the 'silk road' and consists of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.

Egypt.

India.

Iran.

Morocco.

Spain. We have included the mudéjar work.

Syria.

Turkey. We have not included designs from the Topkapı Scroll [3], in spite of the Scroll being in Turkey.

Mathematical patterns are not regarded as having a country of origin, such as those using [2]. Similarly, Roman mosaic designs are not included so that the location is given as the name of the town rather than one of the above areas.

Note that many areas which contain significant Islamic patterns are not included in this list, such as Iraq, Pakistan, and Algeria.

Western Islam. This term is used occasionally on the website. We mean either Spain or Morocco.

Objects which have moved. A good example is that of objects in a Museum since the country of origin is used rather than the position of the Museum.

Questionable objects. We would like to include only objects from the classical period. This is not really feasible or even desirable, since Morocco has an active community producing designs which are clearly in the classical style.

We clearly exclude modern designs which appear here with the title ‘In Islamic Style’. We have also excluded Cosmatesque ornament, for example [Tabernacolo of San Clemente](#).

Corrections, etc. The process of assigning the area of origin changes as further information is found. For instance, Bourgoin Plate 26 [1] has recently been located and is placed in Egypt. See [Bourgoin, Plate 26](#). The process of assigning a country of origin is not yet complete.

What is a pattern? The entire collection has a problem with deciding if two patterns are the same, or if any small differences makes them different patterns.

Implementation logic. The country of origin is obtained by using the link to www.patternsinislamicart.com (if it exists) and also a text search for the country name.

References

- [1] J. Bourgoin, *Arabic Geometrical Pattern and Design*. Dover Reprint 1973. ISBN 0-486-22924-6.
- [2] B. Grünbaum and G. C. Shephard, *Tilings and Patterns*, W. H. Freeman & Co., New York, NY, 1987.

- [3] G. Necipoglu, *The Topkapı Scroll — Geometry and ornament in Islamic architecture*. The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities. 1995. ISBN 0-89236-335-5

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