Review of: "The Uniqueness of the Medieval Persian Art"

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Professor Erbudak's many studies of the symmetries of Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and Asian geometric patterns provide a broad brush comparison of the geometric art of these cultures. He has repeatedly shown with various statistical techniques (MDS, PCA, and HCA) that there are two main groups with similar pattern histories: Hellenistic, Eastern Roman, Armenian, and Andalusian versus the Seljuks and Arab peoples. Here, he uses the same measurements to show how Persian art is distinct from these two groups. I would have liked a table with the sample size examined. However, it is important to point out that although the data is based on simple percentage frequencies, the fact that the frequencies are based on the feature of symmetry that can be systematically measured (rather than separate motifs described differently by different researchers) renders this first overview extremely sensitive to the activities that lead to borrowing and sharing of pattern structure ideas. Erbudak is a physicist--and his mathematical expertise gives us a firsthand view of this massive area covering art from millennia. Now the task lies with historians, art historians, archaeologists, ethnographers, etc., to follow up on the trends and differences he has found and examine and compare separate databases from different sites, traditions, and regions. Symmetry analysis is a very sensitive tool for discerning spatial and temporal continuities and changes. Researchers should avail themselves of Erbudak's signposts to further characterize these great art traditions. I look forward to his proposed study of the influences/connections between these traditions and Afghan and Mongolian art.