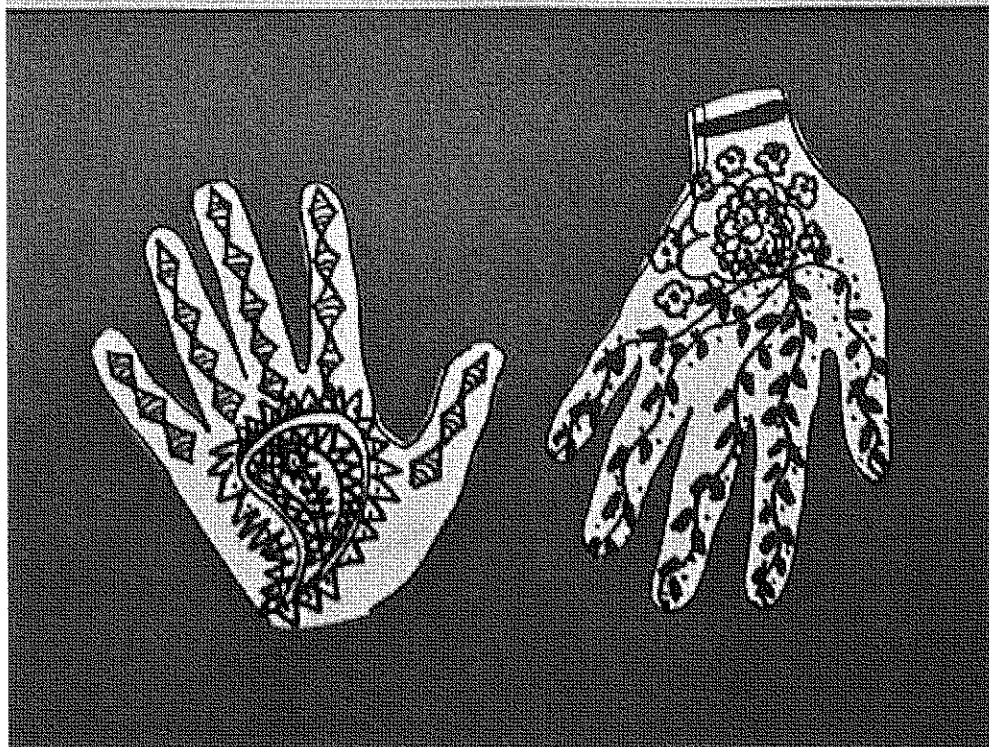
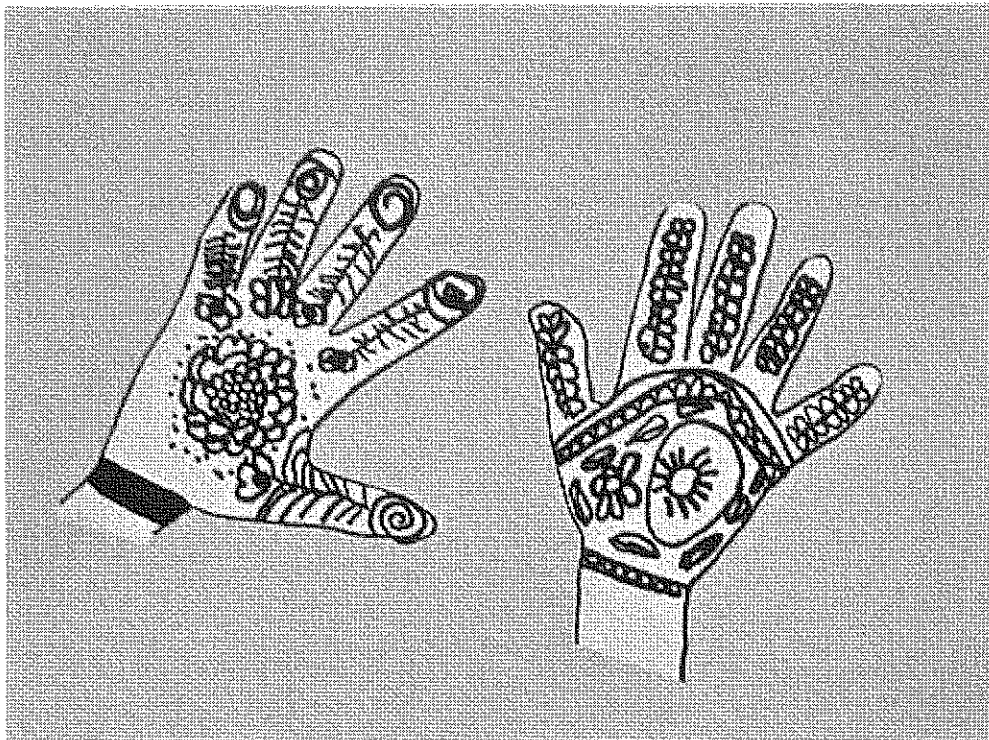

"Henna Hands:" A Simple Craft

Posted on June 7, 2012 by kidworldcitizen | 7 Comments

Here is a wonderfully simple craft that teaches children about the use of henna, a traditional art form that has been practiced in India, the Middle East (especially Pakistan), and parts of Africa (Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan) for hundreds of years.

Mehndi, the art of painting henna on the body, is mostly associated with weddings, and also appears during joyous celebrations such as the Hindu holiday of Diwali, or the Muslim festival of Eid. *Henna* (the dye) is a natural pigment made into a paste from crushing the dried leaves of the henna plant. When it is applied to the skin, and left to soak in, it leaves beautiful decoration on the skin that will fade naturally in 1-2 weeks.

The application of henna varies



My 2 budding artists: the hands on yellow were done by my 4.5 year old, while the hands on blue were created by my 7.5 year old. So pretty!

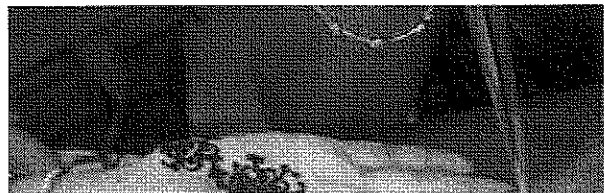
by country and culture, but generally the paste is applied using cone or thin stick to create delicate figures on the hands and feet of women. Often times before a wedding all of the female friends and family members will have a "Mehndi Party" (and sometimes the groom!) to get ready for the wedding. The henna plant is believed to bring love and good fortune, and to protect against evil spirits. Some common symbols are:

circular flowers that resemble mandala

paisley (linked to the mango leaf) as a

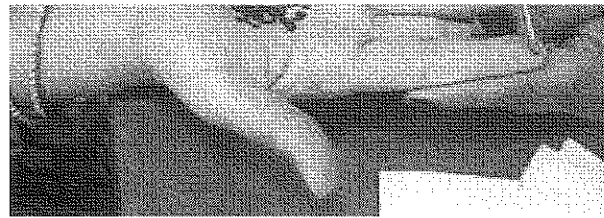


symbol of abundance
orange blossoms as





a sign of
purity,
chastity,
generosity

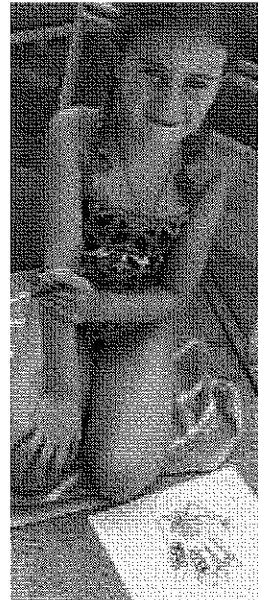


acacia leaves
that suggest persistence and long life

sun/moon demonstrates deep love between a couple

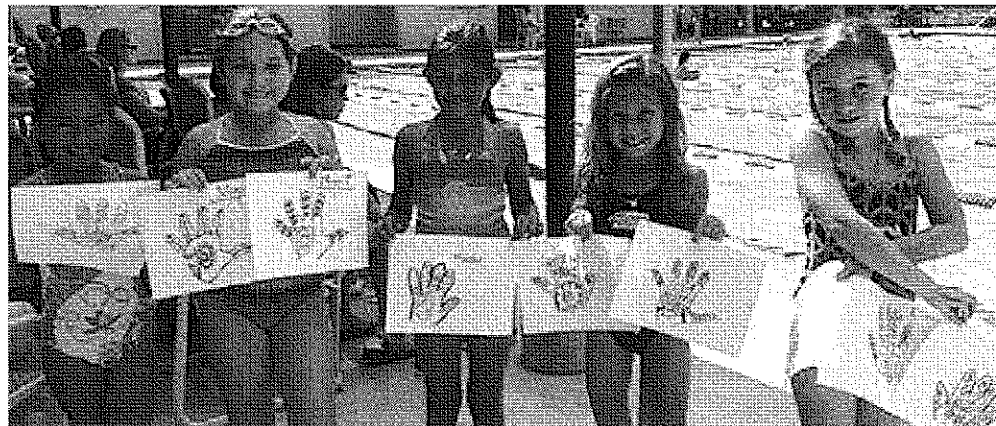
To do this simple craft, first ask children if they have ever seen henna art before. We looked at pages and pages of beautiful examples of henna designs, and immediately my kids were able to name several classmates who had come to school with henna on their hands. Browse these images of henna and find recurring themes and symbols. Pick your favorites, and study them: how do the designs fill the space? Are the delicate designs or stronger and more spaced out?

Have the kids trace their hands on blank paper and begin to fill in their designs with a brown marker (to emulate henna's natural color):



We frequently have to wait at swim team until the younger siblings finish up, so the other day I brought some

paper and brown markers with me to practice. We looked at the pages of a book to get ideas for how to decorate the hands. They really had fun learning about the symbols and trying to produce delicate work:



What a fun way to experience henna art!

Note: I would like to give credit where credit is due, but because I have seen this art