First Days: Seasonal Religious Diversity Celebrations

Autumn Colors
Special Colors in World Religious Practices and their Meanings
Presentations: September, 2011
First Day of Autumn: September 23, 2011
Religion can be explained as a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs.

www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions
Diversity

• The fact or quality of being diverse; difference
• A point or respect in which things differ
• Variety or multiformality
  • [The American Heritage College Dictionary]
JHMI Core Values

• Excellence & Discovery
• Leadership & Integrity
• Diversity & Inclusion
• Respect & Collegiality
Baha’i’

7 million worldwide
About 1.2 million in the United States
12 principles each has a color representation

• Oneness = Red
• Truth = Blue
• Purity = White
• Harmony = emerald Green
• Reason = Brown
• Equality = Red & White
• Freedom of prejudice = Light green
• Peace = Green-blue
• Knowledge & wisdom = Gold
• Justice = clear Green
• Shared Language (heart) = Rose-red
• Reverence & healing = Violet
Buddhism

• Worldwide, 360 million
• About 1.5 million in the United States
• The principle colors involved in Buddhism are Blue, Black, White, Red, Green, and Yellow, and each -- except for Black -- are aligned to a specific Buddha.

Each color can be used in meditation:

Blue = wisdom & healing
White = knowledge & longevity
Red = life force & preservation
Green = balance & action
Yellow = humility & renunciation
Black = clarity & truth about evil
Cao Dai

• Worldwide, about 3 million
• About 25,000 in the United States
• Cao Dai is a fusion of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism with Christian & Muslim elements
  • 3 special colors are worn (robes) and can be found on the flag
• Red = Confucianism, courage & authority
  • Blue = Taoism, freedom
• Yellow = Buddhism, peace & love
Christianity

- 2.1 billion worldwide
- About 225 million in the United States
  - Amber or Gold, is used to describe the overwhelming radiance and presence of God, but is also used to describe Jesus as the glory of God. Amber halos in art suggest a oneness with God and enlightenment
- Blue is used throughout the Holy Scriptures. Representative of water, chastening, and holy service, the color also appears in hanging decorations in holy places. Blue and/or purple are used during the seasons of Lent (before Easter) and Advent (before Christmas)
- Red symbolizes the Holy Spirit
Hinduism

• 900 million worldwide
• About 1 million in the United States
• During a Hindu wedding, there's plenty of red about. Red is seen as a symbol of happiness, and found on the bride's dress, the groom's robe and scarf, and in the sindoor, the holy red powder, that the groom places on the forehead of his bride, welcoming her into his life as his partner. During the ceremony, the groom gives a mangalsutra, a black beaded necklace, to the bride as a symbol of love, integrity and devotion towards her. The bride's hands are decorated with a red-brown henna, which has predated written text in its use, symbolizing joy and happiness.
Islam

• 1.5 billion worldwide
• About 1.6 million in the United States
• Sacred Color of Islam is green and is used for the bindings of the Qur'an and in the silken covers of the Sufi saints. It has been suggested that green is revered because it was worn by Muhammad, but it also symbolizes life and nature.
• White is used to symbolize purity and peace. While attending Friday prayers, many Muslims will wear white.
Jainism

• 4.2 million worldwide
• About 75,000 in North America
• The Jain flag has five different colors:
  • Red color represents Siddha; energy & creativity
  • Yellow color represents Acharya; power & wisdom
  • White color represents Arihanta; knowledge and purity
  • Green color represents Upadhyaya; balance
  • Dark Blue (or Black) color represents Muni (Sadhu); strength
Judaism

- 14 million worldwide
- About 4 million in the United States
- **Blue** represents God’s glory, equilibrium and Israel
- **Silver** means moral innocence and holiness
- **Red** represents life with its joy and happiness, as well as sin
- **White** symbolizes intellectual purity and innocence
Paganism

• **1-4 million worldwide** (the number is unclear)
• **About 600,000 In the United States**
• Paganism includes pantheistic (many gods) religions such as Native American, Wicca, Asatru, and Egyptian and Greek ancient religions.
• Pagan religions are typically rooted in nature and the Earth. Colors are used in rituals and ceremonies.
  • Earth: **Black** = comfort; **Brown** = stability
  • Earth & water: **Green** = healing, fertility, money
  • Earth & fire: **Red** = life, birth/death; **Yellow** = joy, happiness
  • Air & fire: **White** = creativity
  • Air & water: **Blue** = protection, healing, relaxation
  • Fire: **Purple** = power, authority
Shinto

• 4 million worldwide
• 1,500 in North America

• The most prevalent color in Shinto is red, and the meanings behind the color is seen in the dress of gods and spirits, whose purpose is to ward off evil spirits and disease. Some believe that the close association to disease may have had something to do with the color choice itself, red; being the color of smallpox, Scarlett fever, tuberculosis, and the measles.

• Vermillion (red-orange) is also a prominent color seen at the entrance of every Shinto shrine as you walk through the Torii, the main gates that purify each person before they reach the shrine.
Sikhism

• 23 million worldwide
• Approx 80,000 in the United States
• There is no particular color for Sikhs garb, turbans, festivals etc. The Sikh flag that is hoisted at almost every Gurdwara, their house of worship, is a bright orange/saffron color or dark blue. These represent traditional colors for Sikhs, but are not ‘Sikh colors.’
Zoroastrianism

- Worldwide, about 190 thousand
- About 10,000 in North America
- Fire is an important element in worship, therefore, **Red** and **Amber** are prominent colors
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• References
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