

# Review of: "Enigmatic Totems: Exploring the Intersection of Art and Belief"

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**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

Having conducted my own research on spiritual beliefs and practices among Southeast Asian women, I am particularly interested in topics such as this one. I certainly appreciate the challenges involved in writing about abstract concepts that reveal their "footprints," shall we say, in images, art, or totems. Thank you to the authors for tackling this interesting topic and sharing your multidisciplinary perspectives with me, as one of your readers.

My first reaction to this paper was that it seemed to be written in two different styles. At the beginning, the style was very flowery, and at times the amount of adjectives in every sentence made it difficult to discern the core thought that the authors were trying to express. Perhaps this is only a matter of style, though, as I am an American writer who tries to be succinct (which is very difficult, I know, when you write about these sorts of topics). Still, it was hard to grasp the main meaning of such long and complex sentences. For example, this entire section is one sentence:

*This paper aims at drawing upon concepts derived from religious studies, mystical philosophies, and philosophical theories alike, aiming to content canalized throughout millennium channel thought spread centuries first echo forces uniquely emanated minds thinkers ages transcend confines temporal constraints, creating harmonious ecological webbing symbolic constructs spiritual significance assigned cosmic forces structural unity interlinking evolving realm human consciousness patterns reflected meaningful transformational impetus across epochs unravel layers meaning profound influence relationships represent soul quest for discovering natures secrets eclectic mashup doctrines encompassing theological rationalistic paradigms imitated rich tapestry witness multidimensionality individual significances.*

Please don't be discouraged by my comments, but I do believe some editing for clarity is needed, especially with sections 1 and 2.

One more issue that I suggest needs attention is the ordering of the sub-sections in the first half of the paper, too. It seems to me--and again, I have been trained in the American style of research reporting, so please make your own judgement--that the headings should move from the Introduction (which should be shorter), to the Literature Review (which you label Summarize, I believe), to the Methodology (which can include the Question and the Objectives). Actually, within the Methodology, it would help if you would write in direct, clear terms what you *did*--what actions were undertaken as the research methods you used to investigate the topic. For example, Did you interview people in indigenous

communities? Did you review the literature? Did you examine art and artifacts? Did you talk to experts?

When I arrived at section 2, which discussed the importance of the research and the significance of the study, I felt it was so important that I wished it had been placed higher in the paper, probably at the end of the Introduction. But that is the writers' choice.

Beginning at section 3, the paper became easier to read and revealed the content more clearly to me. It was sectioned off into short sub-topics with sub-headings that made the main ideas more salient. By section 4, the writing was more straightforward, clearer, and cleaner. The Conclusion was also very good, especially the last paragraph.

I feel that a thorough edit for uniformity of style would improve the paper so much, as well as a trimming of some of the superfluous parts, especially at the beginning (especially adjectives). To me, it seemed as if the authors were “warming up” at the beginning, then found their “flow” about halfway through. I would hate to think of anyone giving up on this paper before getting to the end because it is very interesting. I can tell it is a topic that has captured their passions, and that is what makes it so very worth reading.

Best wishes,

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