



Sacred art as cultural memory: A philosophical study of wall painting (*Idital*) of the Saura tribe of Odisha

Susanta Sabar

Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy, Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), Deemed to be University, Odisha, India

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.66856/ijssh.2026.8.3.8136>

Abstract

Indigenous religious traditions communicate and maintain knowledge beyond the written word using a variety of symbolic practices, including rituals, oral storytelling, sacred landscapes, music, dance, and visual art. Such practices transmit cosmological beliefs and communal identities from one generation to the next, and they challenge the notion that religious knowledge comes only from scripture. The concept of “cultural memory” is central to the interdisciplinary study of Indigenous religions, emphasizing that memory is a social and cultural construct built up through symbols and rituals and not just through psychological processes. This perspective opens a new understanding of Indigenous artistic practices as important vehicles of religious knowledge and memory. The concept is reflected in the *Idital* of the Saura tribe of Odisha, which are a part of their ritualistic activities and religious heritage of ancestor worship and sacred symbolism. These paintings are signifiers of a vibrant interaction between ancestors and deities based on community engagement and symbolic performance. The research is about the significance of these wall paintings as a holy cultural memory and its philosophical aspects in relation to the religious life. In the research, through qualitative analysis and philosophical inquiry strengthened by the author’s own perspective as Saura, the significance of these paintings that embody a “sacred visual philosophy” that includes ontology, epistemology, aesthetics, and ethics of religious memory is explored.

Keywords: Religion, cultural memory, *Idital*, rituals, philosophy

Introduction

Indigenous religious traditions preserve and transmit knowledge in a number of symbolic ways that extend beyond the written word. It consists of rituals, oral narratives, sacred places, music, dance, and visual art that maintain cosmological ideas and collective identities across generations. These behaviors raise questions about the idea that religious knowledge is solely based on scripture and suggest that memory can be encoded into contemporary cultural acts, allowing for continuity with ancestors while responding to changing historical settings. The interdisciplinary field of Indigenous religions has witnessed a proliferation of notions such as “cultural memory” to explain how ceremonial construction and symbolic interpretation contribute to the maintenance of collective identity. Memory is not simply psychological, and scholars are departing from this view. They refer to the social and cultural construction of memory in symbols and rituals. This leads to a revaluation of Indigenous art practices as mediators of religious knowledge and memory. The Saura tribe of Odisha is an important case study with a rich religious heritage of veneration of ancestors and sacred symbolism. Their wall paintings (*Idital*) are a part of all ceremonial rituals and have long been considered artistic creations. However, cultural memory is safeguarding and conveying the Saura’s religious worldview. The *Idital* serve as a vibrant guideline for the relationship between ancestors and all the deities of the Sauras, emphasizing collective participation and symbolic performance. The research centre poses the question, “How do wall paintings function as a sacred cultural memory in the religious life of the Saura, and what philosophical layers do they bear? It examines the philosophy of religion and cultural memory, and reveals

Indigenous epistemology and how Indigenous practices subvert traditional ideas of memory and symbolism. The technique of the study is qualitative analysis and philosophical investigation. The insider wisdom of the author, as a member of the Saura, enriches the study and helps to grasp the significance of holy paintings. The original work of these paintings is portraying “sacred visual philosophy,” which integrates features of ontology, epistemology, aesthetics, ethics, and religious memory instead of standard art interpretations. The paper is divided into four parts: the theoretical framework of memory and symbolism, the interpretation of *Idital* in the religious tradition of the Saura tribe, the argument for its importance as a repository of cultural memory, and a discussion on the modern-day difficulties affecting the identity of the Sauras. The conclusion in the end is that *Idital* are not only cultural objects but also active representations of Indigenous philosophical ideas, which are strongly associated with religion, memory, and identity.

Part: I

The interpretation of wall murals (*Idital*) from ancestor to present generation has been presented as sacred art, which demands a theoretical framework that incorporates philosophy of religion, cultural memory, and Indigenous knowledge systems. Saura paintings have been often studied from the point of views of anthropology, folklore and visual art with a focus on their religious ritual and anthropological significance. These ideas have greatly contributed to the understanding of Saura culture, yet most of the older people do not adequately explain why these paintings continue to play a vital role in religious life or how they help to continue the communal identity from generation to

generation. Therefore, in this study, the concept of cultural memory is used as the main interpretative frame and is placed within the broader philosophical discourse on religion, symbolism, and holy art.

Memory is usually considered a private mental process of remembering the past. However, there is a growing body of philosophical study arguing that memory also occurs as a collective phenomenon. The Sauras recall their religious rites, stories, ceremonies, symbols, and artistic manifestations that sustain and convey their understandings of the past. Within this concept, memory is not the recall of past events but rather an active cultural process by which civilizations constantly reconstitute their identities and preserve continuity with their predecessors.

Maurice Halbwachs revolutionized the study of memory proposing that it is always socially mediated. "People remember being part of social groups that provide the structures that impart meaning to memories," he says. Cultural memory is performed in participation in behaviors that continuously renew collective identity, not only in possession of knowledge of the past. This understanding is particularly applicable to Indigenous cultures, whose history and religious traditions are mostly passed down in oral storytelling and communal activities, rather than written texts (Halbwachs, 1980) ^[4]. The Saura community knows the wall murals (*Idital*) as a social structure that constantly transmits the ancestral memory in the religious rites.

Jan Assmann proposes the concept of cultural memory, distinguished from communicative memory. Communicative memory is composed of ordinary memories passed down through living generations, whereas cultural memory is solidified in symbolic forms such as rituals, monuments, sacred stories, festivals, and creative traditions. Cultural memory proves resilient, for it is continuously regenerated by ritual performances and symbolic representations. From this perspective sacred art is not merely decorative but also a permanent means by which societies preserve their cosmological ideas, ethical ideals, and religious identities (Assmann, 2011) ^[1]. Therefore, the Saura *Idital* functions as visual stores of cultural memory, sustaining religious continuity through social and historical interpretation.

Beyond the esthetic pleasure is the conceptual understanding of sacred art. In many religious traditions sacred pictures are not merely representations of the divine but are engaged in the creation of sacred realities that are present in human experience. Mircea Eliade argues that the sacred manifests itself through symbols, myths, and rites that convert ordinary objects and places into signs of a transcendent reality. This is why sacred symbols have ontological meaning, because they reveal modes of being that cannot be reduced to scientific observation (Eliade, 1959) ^[2]. In the specific case of the Saura religious activity, the ritual produces the paintings (*Idital*), and residential walls are transformed into sacred spaces where the interactions between humans (Kudan) and the spirits of ancestors are the natural worldview of articulation. The kudan is not so much important for its artistic beauty as for its use in religious rites of ancestral recollection.

An important aspect of interpreting sacred art is the interpretive philosophy of Paul Ricoeur. He believes that symbols always mean more than their literal meaning. They are open to interpretation, as they have different levels of meaning embedded in cultural traditions and historical

experience. He states that memory is not a passive retrieval but an interpretive effort through which societies constantly negotiate their relation to the vanishing ancestors. Sacred images become hermeneutic texts that need cultural engagement to be fully understood (Ricoeur, 1995) ^[6]. This understanding is especially useful in the interpretation of paintings (*Idital*) whose symbolic lexicon cannot be understood through visual analysis alone but must be interpreted within the religious worldview of the Saura community.

From this philosophical standpoint, it continues to hold that sacred arts are continuously acting as knowledge, memory, and identity. Sacred pictures are not nonabsorbable beautiful objects but are at the collective understanding of the universe, moral order, genealogy, and communal membership. Their meaning is always regenerated through ritual performance and social engagement. Hence, the philosophical relevance of paintings (*Idital*) resides not only in its content but also on its influence in the religious life of the community.

At the same time, the present study argues that theories of cultural memory thus far need to engage further with Indigenous epistemologies. Halbwachs, Assmann, Eliade, and Ricoeur created their works predominantly within European philosophical traditions. Through these theories are helpful analytical tools, Indigenous groups such as the Saura understand memory, sacredness, and knowledge within relational ontologies where humans, ancestors, woods, animals, and spiritual beings are part of an interrelated moral world. Thus, this study is not only appropriating western theories within the context of indigenous reality but also dialoguing with Saura's religious thought. This dialogical method treats Indigenous traditions as a source of philosophical knowledge, rather than as mere objects of anthropological description.

This study thus asserts that the wall murals (*Idital*) constitute sacred visual philosophy. They are not only religious expressions but also active agents in the preservation of cultural memory, transmission of Indigenous knowledge and maintenance of religious identity between generations. In this paradigm, sacred art is a dynamic medium of memory, ritual, symbolism, and ontology flowing inside the religious world of the Saura people.

Part: II

Among the Saura (Saora/Sora/Savara) tribe of Odisha, *Idital* have a special significance in religious ritual as sacred visual manifestations of communication between human and ancestral spirits. Kudan is the medium between human and ancestral spirits. The ancestral spirits manifest themselves to him, and he then uses their presence to make paintings in the ceremonial sacred places where they are present during the ceremony. Later, this precious art was preserved to commemorate them and revere them as their sustainer. But in contrast to this decorative or secular type of painting, (*Idital*) is made importantly within ritual situations and draws its significance from the religious beliefs and ceremonial practices of the community. Through the development of ritual and the interpretation of ceremony, they create a sacred presence, bringing ancestors, deities, and the living community into symbolic relation.

Saura's religious worldview is based on a cosmology that sees existence as being in perpetual interaction with humanity and the spirits of their ancestors. In the Saura

religion, there is no separation between sacred and regular life; the entire environment is perceived as inhabited by spiritual presences whose welfare is closely tied to the welfare of the society. Rituals thus serve to sustain the balance existing between these interrelated spheres by means of sacrifice, prayer, song, dance, and sacred visual depiction. Paintings in this religious cosmos are symbolic media that recognize, renew, and ritually realize these ties.

During religious occasions, such as memorial ceremonies for dead family members, healing rituals (samang pupur), agricultural observances (arrow bara pupur), vows made to ancestors (purban jujulanji), and ceremonies performed to restore harmony after illness (angan jamol), perceived spiritual imbalance, and *Idital* are traditionally placed in the middle. The paintings are not made according to individual artistic preference but in response to certain ritual responsibilities. Their production is consequently inseparable from ceremonial performance and communal involvement and reflects the Saura conception that the power of sacred pictures is only inside the framework of religious practice.

The visual language of paintings is very symbolic. Human figures are often shown performing such activities as dance, cultivation, hunting, procession, or ritual performance, stressing the community aspect of religious life. Prominent places are also taken by the animals and birds, trees, mountains, the sun, and celestial bodies in the compositions depicting the relationship between human society and the natural world. Ancestors are not shown as remote historical people but as active participants in the moral and spiritual life of the society. These symbolic depictions communicate a world perspective where life, death, remembrance, and nature are an interconnected sacred reality (Wikipedia, 2025) ^[8]. While written religious scriptures communicate philosophy through texts, the Saura religion has traditionally depended on oral stories, ritual performances, songs and visual symbols. Paintings are lasting depositories of religious information. They carry the memories of ritual commitments, relations with ancestors, cosmological understandings, and ethical responsibilities that otherwise might remain locked in oral transmission. By ceremonies, by watching ritual performance, by elders and ritual professionals teaching the younger generation to interpret these symbols. The paintings are religious expressions of cultural understanding and collective memory.

The sacredness of *Idital* resides not merely in the painted images, but also in the ritual processes through which they are created, interpreted and maintained. A wall is made sacred, ritualized into a place where the material articulation of ancestral memory and spiritual presence is realized. The paintings are then inseparable from the ritual that gives it meaning. To remove the image from its ceremonial context is to remove its religious value, and to turn a living sacred tradition into an esthetic artifact (Pey & Beggiora, 2019) ^[5]. Thinking of *Idital* in this way questions the conventional distinctions between art and religion. Saura's painting is not made for esthetic appreciation, for commercial exchange or for individual creation. Rather, it is an integral part of religious life in which visual memory is created, relationships with the ancestors reaffirmed, and collective identity reconstructed. *Idital* is thus a kind of sacred visual practice in which artistic expression, ritual performance and religious belief are mutually constitutive aspects of the same cultural tradition.

This ethnographic understanding is the basis for the philosophical argument of the next part. *Idital* paintings are sacred visual practices that maintain relations with ancestors, cosmological knowledge and ritual obligations, they can also be read as living forms of cultural memory through which the Saura community constantly remembers, reconstructs and transmits its religious identity from generation to generation.

I am from Rayagada district and brought up in a Saura village called Tolana, Gunupur block. I have always seen paintings (*Idital*) being made during ceremonies related to ancestors and that is how ancestors turn into village deities. I had known them from childhood as a vital part of religious ceremonies and of their intellectual importance. These initial observations ultimately fed into the concerns that frame this work. Why must these paintings be tied to specific ceremonies and how can they have meanings that are untaxed?

Part: III

The wall paintings are much more philosophically important than they are visually or artistically. Anthropology has tended to view these paintings in terms of ritual practice and art history has been interested in their artistic qualities. But philosophically, they are living stores of cultural memory. They conserve, transmit and revitalize the religious consciousness of the saura community. In this view, *Idital* paintings are not mere expressions of religious beliefs, but active participants in the continuous process of collective identity formation.

Idital have been interpreted by many researchers, from their respective theoretical standpoints, as visual representations of cultural memory. They are important because they represent not only human beings, animals, ancestral spirits or ceremonial settings, but also preserve the relationships that constitute the Saura religious universe. All symbolic elements are embedded in a grand cosmic narrative in which ancestors are morally present, nature has sacred agency, and social life is conceived of as participation in an interrelated spiritual order. The paintings thus contain memories that are historical, religious and existential at once.

Unlike textual religious traditions that hold doctrine in written scriptures, the Saura have traditionally stored their religious knowledge mostly in oral storytelling and ritual acts, songs and visual symbolism. In this kind of culture, the *Idital* paintings fulfill a function similar to that of religious texts. They do not express doctrine in propositional language, but encode religious knowledge in symbolic representation and ritual performance. They are not learned through private reading but through participation in ceremonies, observation of ritual practice, and instruction by elders and ritual professionals (kudan). So, memory becomes a group activity.

This knowledge breaks down the old boundaries between word and image. Western philosophical traditions have had a tendency to privilege the written language as the main channel of knowledge, while visual traditions have been, more often than not, considered as secondary ways of expression. The Saura tradition of religion offers an alternative epistemology in which visual symbolism is a legitimate and authoritative medium of communication of spiritual knowledge. The wall is a surface inscribed with memory, continuously renewed and understood through participation in ritual.

The wall painting (*Idital*) has a philosophical significance that can be further interpreted through the sacred symbolism. D. Sanderson believes that religious symbols reveal something of the real world that everyday language is unable to express adequately. Symbols are pointers to religious ideas but they also make sacred realities present in human experience (Sanderson, 2025) ^[7]. In the religious world of the Saura, paintings (*Idital*) are intended precisely for this purpose. The painted images are not passive remembrances of absent ancestors or remote spiritual beings, but they create a sacred presence through ritual and ceremonial interpretation. They make symbolic links between the ancestors, the gods and the living community. The paintings are therefore part of the sacred reality they reflect.

Alex Gillespie's hermeneutic philosophy further develops this reading, emphasizing that symbols are always in need of a deeper understanding than their first presentation. A symbol has what he calls a "surplus of meaning" for its meaning is always being unfolded through interpretation in a living tradition. This interpretation is particularly appropriate for paintings (*Idital*), whose symbolic lexicon cannot be translated into a system of stable visual interpretations. They are important through ritual performance, oral explanation, involvement in the community, and inherited cultural knowledge. Every generation inherits the symbolic tradition and renews it in changing historical circumstances. Cultural memory is therefore a dynamic, not a static, concept (Gillespie, 2009) ^[3].

Idital are a relational ontology from an Indigenous philosophical view that is very different from many worldviews of reality we see today. Humans are not seen as individual persons outside of nature and the spiritual world. More human existential relationship with forests, animals, rivers, village deities and unseen spiritual energies. To remember is not merely to represent the past, but to continue such links by ritual responsibility and collective engagement. Wall murals materialized this relational ontology by pictorially expressing the interdependence of all the aspects of life in the Saura worldview.

The relational perspective carries profound ethical implications. The paintings record cosmological beliefs and moral responsibilities. The knowledge handed down from generation to generation. Symbolic structures that organize ethical behavior communicate respect for ancestors and care for the natural environment, reciprocity within the group and dedication to ceremonial obligations. So sacred art becomes a form for the remembering and transmission of ideals. The loss of these symbols would mean the loss not only of a creative history but also of the moral and religious basis of communal identity.

In that sense, wall murals should be seen as living records, not as static cultural relics. Living archives are meaningful in a different way to museum objects, which preserve the past through physical conservation alone; they are continuously re-created in the community, understood and ritually enacted. Through each ceremonial painting, ancestral memory is reactivated, religious identity is reaffirmed, and the present generation is reintegrated into the cosmological order inherited from its ancestors. Thus, memory is preserved not only through repetition but through the constant enactment of sacred traditions in communal life.

This study, therefore, proposes a philosophical reading of Saura art (*Idital*), which transcends the idea of them being examples of Indigenous art. They are a special type of holy visual philosophy where religion, memory, knowledge and identity unite. The paintings preserve the continuity of the Saura religious world by their ceremonial construction and symbolic interpretation while also allowing each generation to participate in its regeneration. Thus, wall paintings (*Idital*) are not only repositories of the cultural memory, but they are one of the main ways in which the memory continues to live.

Part: IV

As with many tribal religious traditions around the world, the sacred artistic activities of the Saura group are increasingly embedded in fast changing social and cultural settings. Wall murals have been traditionally produced and interpreted within specific contexts that have been radically transformed by modernization, formal education, urban migration, religious conversion, market integration, and technological innovation. These changes did not mean that Saura culture disappeared. Instead, they require a critical philosophical reflection on how cultural memory is retained, changed or re-interpreted under changing historical circumstances.

The importance of *Idital* has always been associated with ritual performance. They have been created by the communal participation of ritual specialists (Kudan), by ancestral obligations, and by specific ceremonial events. Their importance in this religious context is not only visual, but rather in the sacred links they establish between the living, the ancestors and the world of spirits. But social life changes, and so do the ceremonial conditions under which such paintings were made historically. Migration has increased, settlement patterns have changed, traditional houses have been replaced by concrete ones and people have become less involved in customary ceremonies, all of which have had an effect on the conditions under which paintings are still being produced.

One of the major changes is the transfer of *Idital* from sacred ritual spaces to commercial and institutional spaces. In the last few decades, Saura painting has become recognized by national and global markets as a particular form of Indigenous art. This recognition has opened up economic opportunities for many artists and helped to broaden appreciation for Saura visual culture, but it has also posed new philosophical problems concerning authenticity, meaning and the sacred. *Idital* was used for ceremonial purposes, but today it is used for commercial exchange. It looks the same, but they don't know what this old religious art means. The symbolic language remains, but to detach it from the ceremonial context in which it was originally meaningful might, at a fundamental level, change its ritual efficacy.

From the point of view of cultural memory, commercialization has both opportunities and drawbacks. On the other hand, artistic markets can assist in the preservation of visual traditions that may otherwise fade in the wake of rapid modernization. They encourage the young generation to learn the traditional *Idital* and to spread awareness among the general people about the Saura cultural heritage. If, however, the sacred symbols are redefined as commodities whose main value is based on their aesthetic appeal, there is a danger that their religious

connotations may be gradually obscured. The survival of images is not the only factor supporting cultural memory; the survival of the practices, narratives and connections through which images are understood is another factor.

Another important feature of current change is religious transformation. In many Indigenous communities, links with major religious traditions, missionary activity and changing social purposes have changed patterns of ritual practice and communal belief. Such changes should not be understood as simple cultural collapse, for religious traditions have always been flexible to changing historical conditions. Philosophical questions arise, however, regarding the continuity of communal memory in the face of radical modification of the ritual systems. The *Idital* is the symbolic information in paintings. What happens when ancestor ceremonies are not observed anymore? Can visual traditions sustain religious memory outside the ritual life that generated them?

This situation is made all the more complicated by the rise of formal schooling and digital technologies. Younger Sauras of today is in schools and professional jobs far from the villages of their ancestors. These advances offer huge potential for social mobility and intellectual engagement. They may also, at the same time, restrict the possibilities for further participation in ritual life which traditionally provided a channel of transmission of symbolic information. Cultural memory is not the holding of facts about the past; it is the active participation in actions that continually regenerate collective identity. The challenge is to find ways to continue educational progress while protecting Indigenous systems of knowledge.

Philosophically these developments bring up issues of the difference between cultural continuity and cultural preservation. The notion of preservation is generally associated with the conservation of material artifacts and the recording of traditions in museums, archives, pictures and scholarly publications. Continuity, in contrast, implies that traditions should remain a part of the daily life of communities. An *Idital* displayed in a gallery has artistic and historical value, but it does not necessarily have the same religious role as a painting produced for a memorial service or an ancestral ritual. Sacred art is relevant only when it is embedded in the living rituals that are ever renewing their symbolic significance.

This is a major difference in Indigenous philosophy. The survival of cultural memory is not measured only by the physical preservation of artistic forms. But it relies on ongoing relationships between people and their ancestors, ritual specialists, sacred places and community practices. The Saura world view is one in which memory is relational in nature, rather than archival. It is maintained through participation, performance and ceremonial duty. The continuation of *Idital* as sacred cultural memory depends, then, not only on the preservation of traditional motifs but on the preservation of the social and theological conditions in which such motifs continue to speak.

As such the paper argues that policies that treat Indigenous art only as heritage or economic resource are insufficient to protect *Idital*. To appreciate its philosophical import, we must also attend to the living religious traditions from which the paintings derive their significance. Preservation measures should therefore include community engagement, support for ritual specialists and cultural practitioners, intergenerational transfer of Indigenous knowledge, and

respectful documentation in partnership with the Saura people themselves. This approach does not see religious art as a thing of the past, nor as an object of only esthetic admiration. It is a living embodiment of cultural memory whose destiny is ultimately bound up with the continuing health of the religious universe that nurtures it.

Thus, the problems facing *Idital* today are not merely issues of cultural loss. These are philosophical problems about the nature of memory, identity and tradition in a period of rapid social change. The future of Saura visual culture, of the survival of the community's religious memory and collective identity, depends on the survival of *Idital* as a living sacred practice or as an artistic form.

The analysis is informed by the author's positionality as a member of the Saura (Sora) community of the hamlet from which *Idital* has originated in the beginning district of Rayagada, Odisha. The author was raised with the making of *Idital* being part of the community's cultural and religious traditions. *Idital* is done on occasions of ancestor worship, village deity, healing and other important religious events. Long before they became the subject of academic study, they were part of everyday life. It is the intimacy of living involvement that produces the central philosophical problems that motivate this work. Why are *Idital* paintings so important for Saura religious practice? How do these paintings keep the memory of the community alive when there are no written scriptures? What is the conception of reality, memory and identity expressed in this sacred visual tradition?

An important contribution to the research is the author's personal knowledge of the ceremonial practices, symbolic meanings and local interpretations of the Saura community. This intimacy means that there is more than a visual knowledge of the religious importance of paintings, linked to ritual practice, oral traditions and collective participation. This commitment to collaborative scholarship intends to enrich conversations on religion and cultural memory by emphasizing Indigenous intellectual traditions, and by demonstrating the complexity of *Idital* murals as philosophical expressions through which the Saura community articulates their identity across generations.

In addition, the study discusses present-day issues, pointing out that the process of industrialization, along with migration and commercialization, has altered the environment of ritual production and interpretation, creating fears for the continuance of religious memory in circumstances where sacred rituals are deprived of their ritual basis.

Conclusion

The article contends that the (*Idital*) of the Saura tribe of Odisha are sacred visual expressions of cultural memory that enable them to sustain and renew their religious identity. The study shows that the paintings are imbued with philosophical ideas about cultural memory, sacred symbolism, and Indigenous epistemology as living religious rites that inform Saura's collective identity. The research reveals that the paintings (*Idital*) are seen as an expression of an Indigenous worldview that emphasizes the interdependence between humans and ancestors. The painting is an act of ritual rather than an act of art. It stresses the interrelation of ontology, epistemology, ethics and aesthetics in sacred art, with Saura's tribal affirming that the making and reception of these paintings mediate the essence

of community existence. Moreover, the study is interested in current challenges, emphasizing that industrialization, migration and commercialization have changed the context of ritual production and interpretation, raising questions about the persistence of religious memory in the case when sacred rituals lose their ritual foundation. It emphasizes the necessity of upholding the living activities and the creative images, so that *Idital* stays up to date.

Most importantly, the study shows that *Idital* act as sacred visual philosophy that enables the Saura to reflect on existence, ancestry and morality. This perspective stands contrary to the typical idea of philosophy as a written text, and asserts that philosophical concepts are carried effectively through voice and visual representations. Future work on Indigenous ideas and their importance in broader discourses in the fields of religious studies and philosophy will require an interdisciplinary effort. It additionally emphasizes the need to work with Indigenous communities to make sure they're part of this conversation. The *Idital* also has implications for memory and the reaffirmation of ancestral ties, tying the Saura with their past, land and spiritual identities. These images are live expressions of Indigenous ideas that exist between religion, memory and identity.

References

1. Assmann J. The geographical point of view. In: Cultural memories. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2011, 15–27. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-481-8945-88>
2. Eliade M. The sacred and the profane: The nature of religion. Vol. 81. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1959.
3. Gillespie A. The intersubjective nature of symbols. In: Symbolic transformation. Routledge, 2009.
4. Halbwachs M. The collective Memory. HarperCollins Publishers, 1980.
5. Pey CG, Beggiora S. Saora: Eembodying Spirits from Paintings to Script: Ritual Change amoong the Saora. Brill's Encycyclopedia of the Religions of the Indigenous People of South Asia Online. Brill, 2019. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1163/2665-9093-BERO-COM-032057>
6. Ricoeur P. Figuring the Sacred: Religion, narrative, and imagination. Fortress Press, 1995.
7. Sanderson D. Sign and symbol in religions rituals and sign symbol. (Planksip). Planksip, 2025. Oct 24. Available from: <https://www.planksip.org/sign-and-symbol-in-religious-ritual-and-sign-and-symbol-1713045368562/>
8. Wikipedia C. Saura Painting. Wikipedia, 2025. Dec 19. Available from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saura-painting>