

# Somerset Interfaith & Belief

**THINK PIECE; CULTURAL APPROPRIATION of FOLKART & CRAFTING – trying to avoid this when starting new conversations and encouraging interfaith dialogue through making God’s Eyes / Ojos de Dios.**

Cultural appropriation of crafts and folkart during making activity is a sensitive subject. In an attempt to raise awareness of diversity, begin new conversations and bring people in Somerset of different faiths and no faith together, we are aware that a workshop leader will potentially make craft items which are representative of a specific culture, or society or set of beliefs. We recognise these crafts are likely to be generic and do not celebrate the deep and unique meaning given to them by a specific group of people or society. When workshop leaders have craft as a way to enhance knowledge of or connection with values, beliefs, generate curiosity and appreciation of ‘ difference’ that exists within society, then measures should be taken to ensure that participants creating the craft have knowledge of the origin of the craft as well as any unique meaning, beliefs or symbolism behind it. At the very least, this could be introduced and then expanded through talks, images, suggested readings, briefings, to set the craft into context.

In the creation and making of God’s Eyes / Ojos de Dios, participants very simply replicate technique, explore materials, construction methods and pattern to create God’s Eyes and cannot possibly replicate the creation of those within indigenous cultures. When encouraged to approach their own crafting with mindfulness, positivity and a sense of care and compassion, they can put into the crafting for someone they know and to prompt talk and conversation. So although the crafting has value, the maker in Somerset will most probably not be bringing the values base, traditions and beliefs to the making.

Cultural appropriation can include the exploitation of another culture’s religious and cultural traditions, customs, dance steps, fashion, symbols, language, history and music. So whilst crafting God’s Eyes has the potential to bring new social learning experiences, a failure to respect the context of art work, crafts and artisan skills from cultures, these same crafting activities of cultural elements, are lost or distorted when they are removed from their originating cultural contexts, can be disrespectful are perpetuating stereotypes, potentially de-valuing the faith and beliefs of a society and potentially stalling opportunities for interfaith dialogue.



God's eye or Ojo de Dios on Quemado Mountain, San Luis Potosi, Mexico  
Source; WIKIPEDIA

Where cultural crafts are created within workshops as a social activity, there is a fine line between the celebration of beliefs, faith, religion and paying little attention to the values base, traditions and society that lie behind that original craft/ artwork. When leading craft workshops to encourage cross cultural/ interfaith appreciation, the leader has the responsibility to set the context for the craft, and being specific about this craft just being a glimpse into a small part of faith, belief, society. Conversations can use guided questions asking for parallels from participants to make sure they “get it” and offering readings to deepen learning about the beliefs and values base of the original pieces.

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Images of God's Eyes / held by Museum of International FolkArt, New Mexico;

<https://collection.internationalfolkart.org/objects/28611/ojo-de-dios-or-tsikuri?ctx=428abc0d9bf77af679e3f192b8695026f782f16e&idx=0>

<https://collection.internationalfolkart.org/collections>

<https://www.internationalfolkart.org/learn/what-is-folk-art.html>

**Useful weblinks to inspire deeper learning:**

<https://www.internationalfolkart.org/learn/folk-art-for-you/diy-god%E2%80%99s-eye.html>

<https://rhubarbandwren.co.uk/how-to-weave-a-tsikuri-or-ojo-de-dios-gods-eye/>

<https://www.worldviewart.com/index/ojo-de-dios>

<https://nierika.info/>

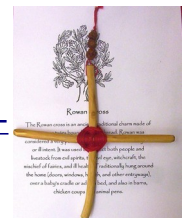
<https://www.thisiscolossal.com/2015/07/the-gods-eyes-of-jay-mohler/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qf5euldYEBg>

**Explore Potential Conections to similar traditional amulets/ beliefs:**

Rowan Tree Cross; Scotland, Celtic traditional amulet

<https://www.mexicolore.co.uk/aztecs/artefacts/huichol-gods-eye-scottish-rowan-tree-cross>



Rowan Cross; Wicca protection charm

<https://sacredwicca.com/imbolc-rowan-cross-protection-charm>



Rowan Cross: Bride's Cross;

<https://museumofwitchcraftandmagic.co.uk/object/rowan-cross-bride039s-cross/>



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