

# Motif Systems and Village Networks in Etikoppaka Turned-Wood Lacquer Craft

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**Abstract:** Etikoppaka, a riverside village in the Anakapalli district of Andhra Pradesh, India, is celebrated for its turned-wood lacquer toys, locally known as Lakkabommalu. These handcrafted objects, made from Ankudu wood (*Wrightia tinctoria*) and coloured with plant-based natural dyes, embody centuries of accumulated craft knowledge and design thinking. While public discourse commonly treats the craft as a product of a single village, recent fieldwork-based documentation reveals a far more complex picture: a multi-village production cluster in which Etikoppaka serves as the principal hub, and neighbouring settlements, Kottam, Mukundharajapeta, Gunnipudi and Kailasapatnam, contribute distinct, specialised products. Drawing on a 2025 BFA thesis based on artisan interviews and direct observation in workshops, this article maps the motif systems of Etikoppaka craft across five purpose-based categories: playing toys, ritual and household utilities, wearable items, decorative objects, and god-goddess figures. It further analyses the spatial distribution of production within the cluster. Findings are situated within published research on proportional aesthetics in Etikoppaka human-figure toys, vernacular reinterpretation of sacred forms, and comparative scholarship on Indian craft clusters. The study demonstrates that Etikoppaka lacquer toys encode rich layers of social practice, ritual memory and design intelligence, and that their continued vitality depends on recognising and supporting the wider village network behind them.

**KEYWORDS:** Etikoppaka toys; turned-wood lacquer; motif systems; village production cluster; Lakkabommalu; Andhra Pradesh; vernacular design; Indian handicrafts

## I. INTRODUCTION

Etikoppaka village, situated on the banks of the Varaha River in Anakapalli district, Andhra Pradesh, India, has, over several centuries, developed a distinctive tradition of hand-turned lacquered wooden toys. Locally known as

Lakkabommalu, these objects are fashioned primarily from Ankudu (*Wrightia tinctoria*), a soft, naturally white timber that is easy to shape on a hand- or motor-lathe and readily absorbs plant-based dyes blended into lac resin. The craft is believed to have evolved from earlier lathe-based carpentry practices, with Vijayanagara-era landlords and later local entrepreneurs encouraging artisans to diversify from structural components into toys, ritual vessels, and decorative objects [1].

In its earliest phase, production concentrated on grain-measuring containers, simple children's playthings and ritual items, all sold at weekly bazaars in nearby Nakkapalli and at regional fairs and festivals. Contemporary output spans a far wider range: miniature kitchen sets, spinning tops, rattles, sindhoor boxes, bangle stands, jewellery, deity figures and hanging ornaments that now circulate nationally and internationally through handicraft emporia, corporate gift channels and export networks. The Geographical Indication (GI) tag, granted in 2017, combined with growing interest in eco-friendly and child-safe products, has further amplified the craft's reach and commercial value [2][3].

Despite this visibility, two important dimensions of the craft have not been systematically studied. First, the internal structure of Etikoppaka's motif repertoire across the full product range, from playing toys to utility containers, wearables, decorative figures, and deity representations, remains only partially mapped in the academic literature. Second, the spatial geography of production, in which multiple villages around Etikoppaka specialise in distinct product lines or stages of the craft, is well known locally but

rarely acknowledged in formal scholarship or policy documents.

This article addresses design motifs in Etikoppaka lacquer craft, based on fieldwork, artisan interviews and close visual documentation of toys across five purpose-based categories. Published work on proportional harmony in Etikoppaka human-figure toys [3], on vernacular sacred design in Etikoppaka deity toys [5], on bell-metal craft clusters in Kondagaon [8], and on Indian craft sustainability [10][11] provides the conceptual and comparative frame. The article is structured as follows: after a literature review and methods section, it presents results organised by production areas and motif categories, followed by discussion and conclusion.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Design aesthetics and proportional harmony

A growing body of quantitative scholarship situates Etikoppaka toys within global debates on visual proportion. Prasad's study of Digital Applications in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage measured 30 human-figure toys and found that 68.63% of calculated body-segment ratios fall within a defined golden-ratio band, with additional clusters in harmonic and "platinum" bands [3]. The same study reports that artisans describe correct proportion through tactile and visual metaphors, "it should stand properly," "the eye tells you", rather than through explicit numerical rules, confirming broader research on embodied cognition in craft apprenticeship [15]. Lee, Hong and Kim's typological framework for proportional analysis in product design provides a complementary methodological tool for categorising the range of proportional relationships observed in Etikoppaka toys [16].

Scholarship on the golden ratio in art and design, including work by Agrawal et al. on Śilpa-śāstra measurement systems [7], suggests that historical Indian craft canons encoded sophisticated proportional logic into seemingly simple objects. These studies collectively frame Etikoppaka toys not as naive folk products but as objects

whose formal logic merits rigorous design-analytical attention.

### B. Sacred forms and vernacular modernism

Chaganti and Adinarayana analyse Etikoppaka wooden deity toys representing Krishna, Radha, Ganesha, Balaji and the Daśāvatāra avatars, and argue that artisans deliberately reduce canonical iconographic complexity to a minimal, recognisable set of cues, prioritising structural stability, child safety and market legibility over strict fidelity to the Śilpa-śāstra [5]. They characterise this process as "vernacular modernism": the conscious reauthoring of temple imagery for domestic, pedagogical and commercial contexts without rupturing devotional recognition. This framing illuminates why Etikoppaka deity toys occupy a liminal space between sacred icon, children's plaything and exportable craft commodity.

### C. Craft clusters, livelihoods and sustainability

Rao, Balaji and Joshi's study of Etikoppaka, within a wider survey of Indian wood-toy traditions, documents the village's historical development and links it to forest-resource use and artisan livelihood patterns in the Eastern Ghats [1]. Kumar's survey of traditional crafts across Andhra Pradesh provides a regional context, situating Etikoppaka within a state-wide mosaic of material cultures ranging from Kalamkari textiles to Kondapalli toys [2]. Both works confirm that Etikoppaka's craft identity is embedded in specific forest ecologies, migration histories and patronage relationships.

Research on bell-metal Dhokra casting in Bhelwapadharpara, Kondagaon, Chhattisgarh, offers an instructive comparative case: it documents how a concentrated artisan colony organises production around motif repertoires anchored in tribal deities, everyday life and ritual objects, combining hereditary skill with evolving market demands [8]. Khan's grounded analysis of the Indian arts-and-crafts sector argues that sustainable futures for such crafts require treating artisan communities as knowledge systems rather than merely as labour [10]. Brown and Vacca extend this argument in a fashion-craft context, emphasising that cultural sustainability demands equitable recognition of

distributed production networks [11]. Teja and Singh's study of financial literacy among Etikoppaka women highlights persistent gaps in artisans' economic agency within the cluster, underscoring the human-capital dimensions of sustainability [14].

#### *D. Heritage documentation*

Technical documentation by AIACA/Craftmark on Etikoppaka provides baseline product and process data for the craft [4], while WIPO's profile of the GI-tagged toys foregrounds gender dimensions and intellectual property governance [13]. Yastikli's methodological work on the digital documentation of cultural heritage informs the broader imperative to record motif repertoires and production geographies before tacit knowledge is lost [6].

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The primary empirical source for this article is an unpublished BFA thesis submitted in 2025 to Dr YSR Architecture and Fine Arts University, Kadapa, Andhra Pradesh, India. The thesis focuses on design motifs in Etikoppaka lacquer craft and is based on qualitative fieldwork conducted in Etikoppaka and surrounding villages. Methods described in the thesis include semi-structured interviews with senior and younger artisans, direct observation of workshop and household production spaces, and close visual documentation of finished and in-progress objects across multiple product categories.

Key artisan informants include Peddapati Apparao (Lakkapidathalu), Gandepalli Suryanarayana (Musanam bharinalu and pacifiers, Mukundharajapeta), Sontenu Rambabu (rattles, Kottam), Tangeti Ayyana (bangle stands, Balaji toys, veenas, Kailasapatnam), Kottala Srinu (Balaji sindoor boxes, Etikoppaka), and Tamarapalli Appalachari and Varahalu (birds, Etikoppaka), all interviewed during October–November 2025.

Motifs were classified inductively according to the purpose-based taxonomy articulated by the artisans themselves during interviews: (i) playing toys, (ii) utilities (ritual and household), (iii) wearable items, (iv) decorative objects, and (v) god–goddess figures. For each motif

subcategory, the thesis records the form, materials, typical lacquer colours and enamel paint decoration, perceived function, and artisan commentary on origin, evolution, and market response. Village-level production data were gathered through targeted interviews with artisans in Kottam, Mukundharajapeta, Gunnipudi and Kailasapatnam, capturing information on product specialisations, inter-village material flows, and the number of practising families.

Published secondary sources, including the FAO wood-toys study [1], Kumar's Andhra Pradesh crafts survey [2], Prasad's proportional analysis [3], Craftmark documentation [4], the sacred-forms article [5], and comparative literature on craft clusters and sustainability [8][10][11], are used solely for contextual and comparative framing. All empirical descriptions of Etikoppaka motifs, village names, and inter-village product flows are limited to information contained in the thesis and fieldwork documents. The study is qualitative and typological; findings reveal structural diversity in motif systems and production geographies rather than statistically generalizable patterns.

### **IV. RESULTS**

#### **Manufacturing Clusters**

Fieldwork reveals that what the market labels "Etikoppaka lacquer toys" is, in practice, the output of a multi-village craft cluster in which distinct settlements contribute specialised products or stages of production. Etikoppaka village itself functions as the dominant production and marketing centre, home to the greatest concentration of artisans and the primary venue for lacquering, painting, retail sale and export dispatch.

**Kottam**, a small village near Etikoppaka, has earned a quiet but significant reputation for wooden rattles, particularly doll-shaped pieces known locally as "Tic Tics." Around thirty families currently practise the craft there, producing rattles throughout the week and sending consignments, usually weekly, to Etikoppaka for sale. **Mukundharajapeta**, in Nakkapalli mandal of Anakapalli district, specialises in two highly ritualised products:

Musanam bharinalu (funerary sindhoor containers) and traditional wooden pacifiers called Pala Peeka or Dhondakayi, maintained by only approximately four families who carefully transmit the skill within households.

**Gunnipudi** is the primary source of six-in-one and related nesting dolls (Dastha bommalu): artisans there turn and assemble raw wooden sets, which are then sent to Etikoppaka for lacquering and detailed painting, forming a multi-stage, multi-site production chain.

**Kailasapatnam**, located in Kotauratla mandal of Anakapalli district, has become a key node for bangle stands, veena-shaped decorative items and Balaji toys; several Kailasapatnam artisans trace their lineage to Etikoppaka families who migrated there, and their products now constitute a substantial share of items sold under the Etikoppaka name. This distributed structure mirrors the clustered organisation documented for Dhokra bell-metal craft in Kondagaon, where concentrated artisan families sustain a diverse motif repertoire for wider markets [8].

## Various Design Motifs

### A. Playing Toys

Playing toys form the oldest and most culturally central motif group, designed explicitly for children and combining sensory appeal with safety. All are turned from Ankudu wood, dried in sunlight, smoothed with emery paper and finished with plant-based lacquer colours; enamel paints are added for facial and decorative details.

#### 1. Kitchen Sets (*Lakkapidathalu*)

Miniature kitchen sets (*Lakkapidathalu*) reproduce domestic cooking spaces at child scale. Sets include tiny pots, plates, glasses, cups, spoons, pans, buckets, gas stoves, and cylinders, all individually turned and finished with vibrant natural lacquer. Artisans describe how earlier generations made smaller sets with fewer utensils; later makers expanded the repertoire to include modern equipment and now offer three size grades, mini, medium and large, to address different age groups and price points. The toys encourage role-play, coordination and imaginative engagement, and are particularly valued by parents because

of their soft wood, rounded corners and organic dyes, which make them safe for young children.



Figure 1 Kitchen Set

#### 2. Rattles

Rattles are among the most traditional *Lakkabommalu* objects, dating back to the earliest documented phase of the craft. Types include the *Damarakam*, *Jhunjhunu*, modern "tick-tick" forms and animal-shaped variants, all producing sound through enclosed beads, seeds, small metal pieces or wooden pellets. Artisans carefully vary internal fill and casing geometry to create a spectrum of auditory profiles, from soft jingles to sharper rhythms, that address different stages of infant development. Visually, rattles feature bright lacquer bands and finely painted faces, giving them a distinctive, cartoon-like expressiveness that is appreciated by children and collectors alike.



Figure 2 Rattles

#### 3. Catch-the-Ball Toys

Catch-the-ball toys consist of a turned cup or hollow form attached to a handle, with a wooden ball tethered by a string. The challenge of catching the ball develops hand-eye

coordination, timing and patience, making these toys valued by both artisans and parents for their developmental benefits. Their surfaces are fully rounded and lacquered with organic dyes, ensuring durability and safety.

#### **4. Spinning Tops (Bongaralu)**

Spinning tops, locally known as Bongaralu, are among the oldest Etikoppaka toys. Makers first turn a basic conical or pear form, then refine the contour and mass distribution to optimise spin quality before applying concentric colour bands that accentuate rotational motion. Tops are produced in multiple sizes, from everyday play pieces to large display models, and are widely appreciated for developing focus, fine motor control, and a sense of wonder.



Figure 3 Spin top

#### **5. Tic Tics**

Tic Tics are doll-shaped rattles specific to Kottam village, named for the distinctive sound they make when shaken. Although the basic structure is standardised across the approximately thirty producing families, each artisan introduces subtle personal variations in colour combinations, proportions and facial painting, making Tic Tics simultaneously a commodity and a vehicle for individual expression. Their steady demand sustains both the craft's heritage and the livelihoods of Kottam families.

#### **6. Pacifiers (Pala Peeka / Dhondakayi)**

Traditional wooden pacifiers, such as Pala Peeka or Dhondakayi, serve the same soothing function for infants as modern rubber pacifiers, harnessing the natural sucking reflex to calm newborns. The object consists of a slender central shaft with rounded ball-like ends; proportions are

chosen to fit comfortably in a baby's hand and mouth while preventing deep insertion. Production is now concentrated in Mukundharajapeta, where only about four families maintain the craft, making it both rare and ritually significant. These toys are typically given to newborns during the first family visit in Telugu households.



Figure 4 Pacifiers

#### **B. Utilities**

Utility items are divided into ritual utilities, sindhoor boxes and funerary containers, and household utilities such as keychains, bangle stands, bowls, pen stands, skipping ropes, and kolatam sticks. All are made using the same lathe-and-lacquer technique applied to toys, combining functional utility with Etikoppaka's characteristic surface aesthetics.

##### **B. 1) Ritual Utilities**

##### **1. Sindhoor Boxes (Kumkuma / Pasupu Bharinalu)**

Sindhoor boxes are among the oldest known Etikoppaka objects, historically used to store vermilion (kumkuma) and turmeric (pasupu) for domestic adornment and temple ritual. Traditional versions were large, and production was surrounded by taboos about who could touch the lacquer, reflecting specialised ritual roles within artisan families. Over time, many new variants have appeared, including paired boxes whose lids are sculpted and enamel-painted as bride and groom faces, transforming a storage vessel into a potent marital symbol widely gifted at Telugu weddings.



Figure 5 Pasupu/Kunkuma Boxes

## 2. *Balaji Sindhoor Boxes and Bride-Groom Sindhoor Boxes*

Balaji-themed sindhoor boxes incorporate crown and vertical tilak references to Lord Venkateswara, adapting devotional iconography into a container form. Bride-groom sindhoor boxes display paired sculpted faces on lids, encoding the marital union in vermilion-related symbolism. Both variants exemplify how utility objects in Etikoppaka absorb ceremonial and devotional meaning while retaining their practical storage function.



Figure 6 Balaji and Bride-Groom Sindhoor boxes

## 3. *Musanam Bharinalu*

Musanam Bharinalu are small containers prepared as offerings to fulfil vows made when a person dies; family members commit to offering a specified number of these containers in the name of the deceased, expressing prayers for the soul's peace. They are predominantly made in Mukundharajapeta and sold in Etikoppaka, binding the two villages through a ritual economy of mourning and remembrance. Their presence in the market illustrates how the craft cluster serves not only celebratory but also funerary dimensions of Telugu social life.



Figure 7 Musanam bharina (without lacquer dye)

## B. 2) *Household Utilities*

### 1. *Keychains*

Keychains are made by turning small beads and shapes, drilling holes, and stringing them with red silk thread into compact decorative fobs. Low in price and widely bought as souvenirs, they bring Etikoppaka's colour palette and finishing style into everyday carry, functioning as micro-ambassadors of the craft brand.



Figure 8 Human head keychain

### 2. *Bangle Stands*

Bangle stands comprise horizontal rods or spindles on a sturdy base, allowing bangles to be stored and displayed neatly. Their elegant, rustic appearance, smooth lacquer surfaces, sometimes accented with fine engravings, make them both functional organisers and decorative objects. Production has expanded beyond Etikoppaka into Kailasapatnam, reflecting growing demand and the spatial redistribution of work within the cluster.



Figure 9 Bangle stand



Figure 11 Skipping Sticks

### 3. Bowls and Pen Stands

Turned bowls and pen stands occupy a liminal space between utility and décor. Their simple cylindrical or flared forms foreground lacquer colour and rhythmic banding, making them popular both as practical organisers on office desks and as decorative showpieces in domestic interiors.



Figure 10 Pen Stands

### 4. Skipping Ropes and Kolatam Sticks

Wooden-handled skipping ropes and kolatam sticks, used in traditional group dance performances, extend the Etikoppaka idiom into play and performative contexts. Turned, lacquered handles bring the craft's visual language into movement-based activities, connecting production with embodied cultural practice.

### C. Wearable Items

Wearables extend the vocabulary of turned-wood lacquer onto the human body. Artisans and customers value them for their lightness, warmth of touch and use of organic dyes perceived as safe for skin contact. Types include earrings, bangles, neck-sets, and hairpins, all of which adapt toy motifs, birds, floral abstractions, and geometric bands at body scale.

*Earrings* are fashioned as small discs, cylinders, teardrop forms or bird miniatures, turned from Ankudu and finished with lacquer and enamel details. Bird-shaped earrings directly borrow from the decorative toy repertoire, miniaturising species-specific forms, parrot, crow, and sparrow, for comfortable wear.

*Bangles* present smooth, rounded cross-sections with bold colour blocking or fine-line banding, echoing the ornamental logic of bowls and bangle stands. Their perceived eco-friendliness and lightness relative to metal bangles have broadened their appeal among urban and export buyers.



Figure 12 Bangles

*Neck sets* combine turned beads of varying sizes, strung in coordinated palettes that may match earrings or bangles to create complete jewellery ensembles. The rhythm of repeated bead forms along a necklace echoes the proportional concerns observed in human-figures and utility toys.

*Hairpins* carry turned ornamental ends, simple bulbs, flowers, or bird forms on slender shafts, combining function with display. Their popularity reflects the broader migration of Etikoppaka motifs from toy shelves to personal adornment in contemporary markets.



Figure 13 Hairpins

#### **D. Decorative Items**

Decorative items divide into hanging pieces and free-standing toys used primarily for display. This category includes doorbells, chains, bird and animal figures, mother-and-child compositions, king-queen sets, six-in-one dolls, and an overlapping group of god-goddess figures.

*Hanging Decorative Items* include mobiles, wall hangings and composite forms in which turned beads and shapes are strung vertically or horizontally. Placed near doors or windows, they catch light and air movement, their lacquered surfaces and gentle motion creating a calming visual effect sought by both rural and urban buyers.



Figure 14 Hanging bells

*Door Bells* are structured as Thoranas, long cords decorated with beads and bells, that generate soft chimes when disturbed by wind or movement. Their eco-friendly materials and cultural resonance have driven growing demand from urban consumers and interior decorators, making them among the most commercially dynamic segments of the decorative category.



Figure 15 Door Bells

*Chains*, inspired by chandelier forms, repeat turned units in varied sizes and colours to create rhythmic hanging

compositions for hall and room centres. By scaling standard bead motifs into extended sequences, artisans demonstrate the modular versatility of the Etikoppaka formal vocabulary.

**Birds and Animals:** Bird sets are among the oldest Etikoppaka decorative motifs. Artisans observe local species, crows, parrots, sparrows, and translate their forms into turned ovoid bodies with added tail pieces and painted plumage, typically shown perched on small pedestals. Animal rattles and figures extend this strategy of naturalistic abstraction, rendering dogs, elephants and other creatures in the characteristic smooth, lacquered Etikoppaka idiom.

**Mother and Child** figures condense the iconography of maternal care into a compact composition. Earlier versions were painted entirely in black; contemporary makers introduce brighter lacquer palettes while maintaining the emphasis on bodily closeness and emotional connection. Prasad's proportional study notes that maternal figures are among the groups in which golden-ratio alignments are most frequently observed [3].



Figure 16 Mother and child

**King and Queen Toy Sets** (Raja and Rani) represent bride and groom (pellikoduku–pellikuthuru) in stylised royal attire and are now primarily manufactured as marriage gifts, their production peaking seasonally in advance of the Telugu wedding calendar. Lacquer provides base colours; enamel

paints articulate facial features, garments and jewellery, with the bride shown in a sari and the groom in a pattu dhoti.



Figure 17 Raja Rani Toys

**Six-in-One Dolls** (*Dastha Bommalu*) consist of nested figures that fit inside each other, each slightly smaller than its predecessor. Predominantly produced in Gunnipudi in raw-wood form and then sent to Etikoppaka for lacquering and painting, they exemplify the multi-site collaborative production chain. Their hollow turning demands a high level of proportional precision; each inner body must be reduced consistently while maintaining visual coherence across the set.



Figure 18 Dastha Bommalu (Five in One set)

**Gods and Goddesses:** Deity toys, Balaji, Radha–Krishna pairs, Ganesha, Daśāvātāra sets, occupy a liminal space between devotional icon, children's toy, and collectable artwork. Artisans retain minimal but immediately recognisable attributes, Krishna's flute, Ganesha's trunk, Balaji's crown and tilak, while simplifying complex poses and multi-armed forms into smooth, rounded, child-safe silhouettes. Enamel paints applied over lacquered bases

provide the eyes, lips and costume details that complete the icon. Many Balaji toys sold in Etikoppaka are produced in Kailasapatnam, where artisans of Etikoppaka descent specialise in these forms [5].



Figure 19 Example of Lord Ganesh and Lord Balaji Toys

**Veena:** Miniature veenas celebrate the region's classical musical heritage. Turned and assembled from multiple wooden components, these decorative instruments feature fine lacquer detailing and stringed elements. Production is heavily concentrated in Kailasapatnam, where artisans specialise in translating the complex geometry of the Carnatic string instrument into the simplified, lacquered idiom of Etikoppaka craft, creating highly sought-after display pieces.

**Working Human Figures:** Figurines depicting everyday rural life, such as farmers, potters, weavers, and women carrying water or grinding grain, form a distinct subcategory of decorative items. These working human figures translate the agrarian and artisanal economy into sculptural form. Their proportions often align closely with the golden-ratio bands identified by Prasad, achieving a naturalistic balance despite the geometric constraints of lathe-turning.

## V. DISCUSSION

The results confirm that Etikoppaka lacquer craft operates as a structured design system embedded in a regional production network, rather than as an isolated village tradition. Motifs across all five categories, playing toys, utilities, wearables, decorative items and deity figures, are not arbitrary: they cluster around observable domains of

social life: childhood development, domestic organisation, life-cycle rituals, devotional practice and bodily adornment.

Playing with toys such as kitchen sets, spinning tops, rattles, and pacifiers reveals how artisans translate cognitive-developmental needs and domestic observations into design, balancing sensory appeal, motor affordances, and safety within the constraints of the lathe. Utility containers demonstrate the craft's capacity to inhabit both everyday routines and heightened ritual moments: sindhoor boxes move from kitchen shelf to wedding altar; Musanam bharinalu mediate between the living and the recently deceased. Wearables and decorative chains, bells and mobiles extend Etikoppaka motifs into the body and the home environment, enabling a continuous sensory presence of the craft in daily life.

The village-level specialisations significantly deepen this picture. Kottam's Tic Tics, Mukundharajapeta's funerary containers and infant pacifiers, Gunnipudi's nesting dolls and Kailasapatnam's bangle stands, veena idols and Balaji toys together sustain the breadth of what consumers encounter as the Etikoppaka brand. Comparing this to the bell-metal Dhokra cluster in Kondagaon, where neighbourhood-level artisan colonies collectively support national and export markets [8], suggests that distributed, motif-specialised production is a recurring feature of Indian craft clusters rather than an anomaly. Khan's argument that sustaining such crafts requires treating artisan communities as knowledge systems applies with particular force here: each specialised village is, in effect, a custodian of a subset of the overall Etikoppaka design vocabulary [10].

The proportional sophistication documented by Prasad [3] and the sacred-design intelligence analysed by Chaganti and Adinarayana [5] further underscore the depth of design knowledge embedded in the craft. Proportional harmony that aligns with the golden ratio and related bands is not the product of conscious calculation but of iterative refinement through apprenticeship and market feedback, a form of embodied design thinking whose logic is consistent with Gamble's account of craft pedagogy [15] and Lee et al.'s framework for proportion in product design [16]. That the

same artisans also make conscious decisions about how much canonical iconographic detail to reduce or retain in deity toys, and how to proportion nested dolls so that each inner figure remains coherent at a smaller scale, indicates a versatile design intelligence operating across multiple object types.

For heritage policy and craft-support programmes, these findings argue for a cluster-level approach. GI protection, design-workshop programmes, credit schemes and marketing support should address not only Etikoppaka village but also the contributing settlements whose livelihoods depend on specialised, and sometimes fragile, product lines. Teja and Singh's attention to financial literacy gaps among Etikoppaka women points to a further equity dimension: sustainable support must reach artisan households across the cluster, not only those visible in the primary market [14].

## VI. CONCLUSION

Etikoppaka turned-wood lacquer craft, viewed through the dual lenses of motif systems and village production networks, emerges as a richly layered, collaborative enterprise that encodes regional identity, ritual knowledge and sophisticated design logic within compact wooden objects. Playing toys, ritual and household utilities, wearable items, decorative figures and deity representations together form a visual ethnography of rural Andhra life, distilled through the constraints and possibilities of the lathe, organic lacquer and plant-based colour.

Simultaneously, production is distributed across a constellation of villages that collectively sustain the breadth of the Etikoppaka catalogue. Kottam, Mukundharajapeta, Gunnipudi and Kailasapatnam each specialise in particular motifs or production stages, linked to Etikoppaka through flows of raw, semi-finished and finished goods, as well as through kinship and knowledge networks. Recognising this geography is essential for any serious effort to support the craft's future.

This article contributes to the scholarly literature on Etikoppaka by providing the first comprehensive, purpose-

based typology of motifs drawn from primary fieldwork, combined with a spatial analysis of the production cluster. Future research might extend these findings through quantitative production surveys covering all cluster villages, longitudinal studies of motif evolution, and participatory design projects that mobilise artisan knowledge for new market opportunities while respecting the craft's cultural integrity.

## GLOSSARY

**Ankudu / Ankudu Karra:** the local Telugu name for *Wrightia tinctoria*, the soft, white wood used for Etikoppaka toys.

**Bongaralu / Bongara:** a local term for spinning tops made in Etikoppaka.

**Damarakam / Jhunjhunu:** Traditional rattle forms with distinctive sound patterns.

**Dastha bommalu:** Six-in-one (also five-in-one or three-in-one) nested dolls, mainly produced in Gunnipudi.

**Dhondakayi:** a pacifier toy named for its resemblance to the ivy gourd vegetable.

**GI tag:** Geographical Indication status granted to Etikoppaka toys in 2017.

**Kolatam sticks:** turned wooden sticks used in traditional folk dance, are also produced as Etikoppaka items.

**Kumkuma bharinalu / Pasupu kumkuma bharinalu:** Sindhoor boxes for storing vermilion and turmeric; among the oldest Etikoppaka objects.

**Lakkabommalu:** a general Telugu term for Etikoppaka turned-wood lacquer toys.

**Lakkapidathalu:** Miniature kitchen sets representing domestic utensils and cooking spaces.

**Mokkubadulu:** Votive stands and ritual items offered in temples; sometimes made using turned-wood techniques.

**Musanam Bharinalu:** Funerary containers offered in the name of deceased persons, mainly produced in Mukundharajapeta.



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**Pala Peeka:** Traditional wooden pacifier for infants; also called Dhondakayi.

**Pellikoduku / Pellikuthuru:** King–queen decorative figurine sets representing the groom and bride.

**Thorana:** Decorative door hanging; Etikoppaka door bells commonly follow this structural pattern.

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