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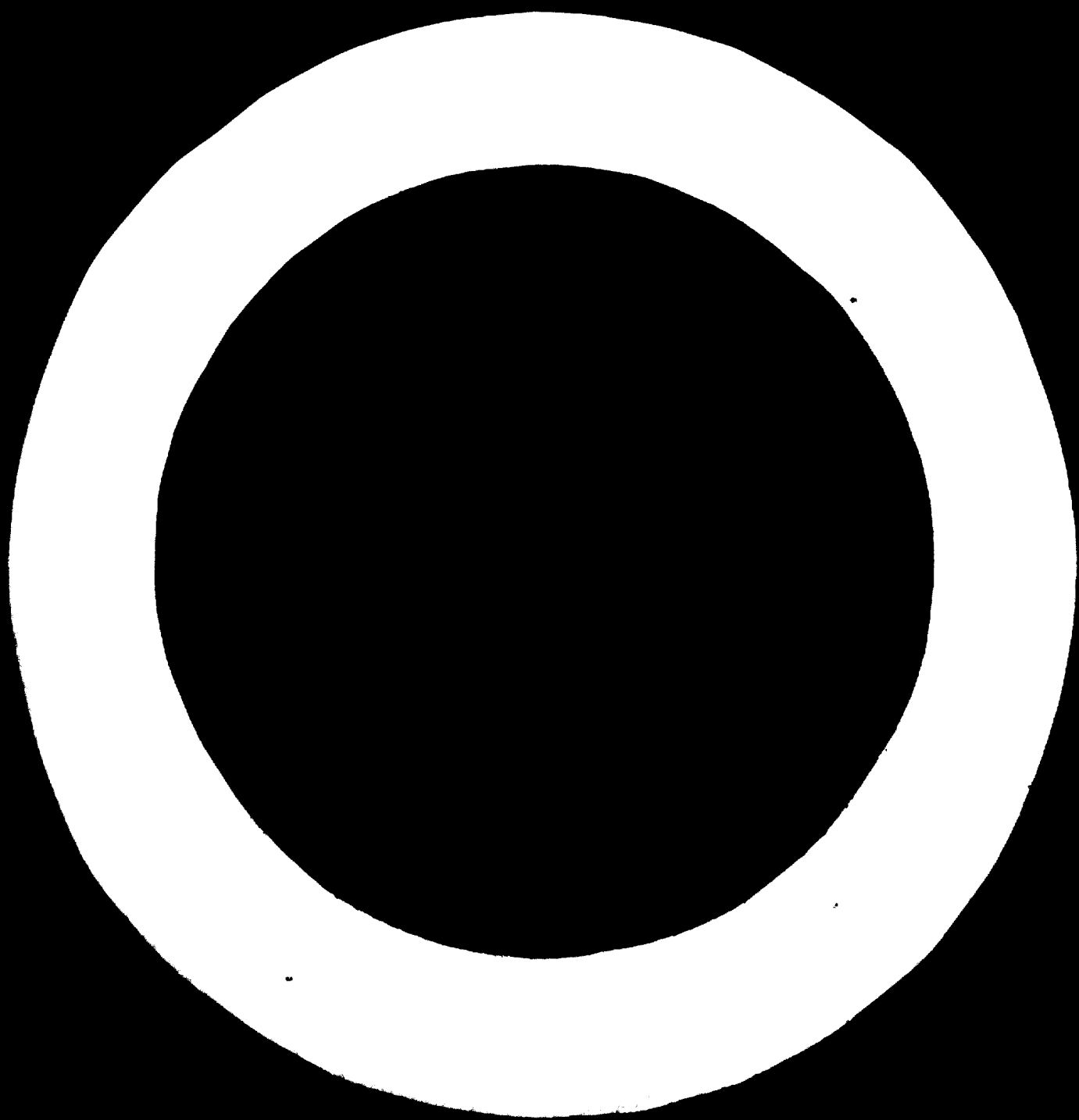
THE FURNITURE AND JOINERY INDUSTRY IN UGANDA

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Production from the forestry sector was two per cent of the gross domestic product in 1969, and this contribution was estimated at 145.5 million Uganda Shillings. The processing industries contribution in the same year was estimated at 22.2 million Uganda Shillings.

1.2 The furniture and joinery industry has been mainly dependent on sawn timber and to a lesser extent on plywood and particle board. The 1969/70 domestic production values for wood products are as follows:

Product	Quantity	Value in million Uganda Shillings	Per cent
Sawn wood	65,000 m <sup>3</sup>	20.5	38
Plywood	2,033,000 m <sup>2</sup>	17.6	32
Particleboard	157,000 m <sup>2</sup>	1.4	2
Matches	67,087,000 gross	14.9	27

## 2. SOURCE OF MATERIAL FOR THE INDUSTRY

2.1 The furniture and joinery industry is dependent mainly on sawn timber most of which comes from Uganda's natural high forests. There are 31 sawmills employing an estimated total of 3,400 people and producing about 65,000 m<sup>3</sup> of sawn timber. More than 40 different species are cut from the natural forests. Approximately 5 per cent of the total production are softwoods. The furniture and joinery industry uses about a dozen or so species of which Mahoganies and Chlorophoa excelsa (IROKO) predominate.

2.2 A single plywood plant in the country provides some plywood to the furniture and joinery industry. Approximately 40 per cent of the total plywood production is used in construction work and furniture and joinery. The rest is used for tea chests.

2.3 A small particleboard plant went into production in 1966/67 and now produces about 157,000 m<sup>2</sup>. Very little of this, however, is used in the furniture and joinery industry because particle board is a relatively new product in the country and lacks surface finishing.

## 3. LOCATION OF THE INDUSTRY

3.1 The small furniture and joinery workshops are all over the country though mainly near sources of sawn wood i.e. near mills, or in towns and trading centres. As would be expected, these small organisations are one or two men

concerns with little capital and cannot, therefore, afford to work far away from the source of timber and in towns. Within or near small towns, a number of larger furniture and joinery workshops employing 6 to 12 men can be found.

3.2 A number of larger furniture and joinery workshops have been established in our large towns and the city of Kampala. These are well organised workshops with a manager and most of them employ more than 20 men each.

#### 4. QUALITY OF PRODUCTS

4.1 Small furniture and joinery makers produce simple products like chairs, tables, benches, etc. mainly for very local use. Most of these chairs etc. are of poor design, rough workmanship and little or no finish.

4.2 High quality furniture is produced by large furniture makers in large towns and is mainly by the high income group of the community.

4.3 There is a big variation in the quality of joinery produced in the country. High quality joinery may be made of such timbers like Mahoganies in which case, painting is not necessary. This type of joinery is common in high rise buildings and other high quality houses. Other cheaper timber species are used provided they are painted.

4.4 Steel has of late been used competitively for joinery in a number of buildings including small residential houses. One factory manufactures joinery on a large scale and of a high quality. A number of individuals in and around big towns make some but of a lower quality.

#### 5. MACHINERY FOR THE INDUSTRY

5.1 In one or two men operations, hand tools are commonly used and these include planers, saws, hammers, chisels and other simple implements that may be required for the job. On the whole, this equipment is also typical of many small workshops. A few of these, however, have a universal woodworking machine.

5.2 A typical "medium" to "large" workshop would have at least the following machinery:

- a universal woodworking machine or a planer thicknesser;
- a narrow band saw;
- a spindle moulder;
- a four cutter (3 workshops);
- a mortising machine;
- a belt/disc sander;

- a tilting dimension saw bench;
- a knife grinder;
- a router (in one or two).

## 6. MANAGEMENT AND FINANCING OF THE INDUSTRY

6.1 The furniture and joinery industry is in the hands of private individuals who finance and manage their own businesses. The only workshops financed and managed by Government are those of the Ministry of Works, Forest Department and Prisons Department.

6.2 Lack of capital is always a draw-back to developing the industry particularly among the Ugandan Africans. In a few instances, commercial banks have lent money to these individuals in order to enable them put up decent furniture workshops mainly in Kampala and other large towns.

## 7. MARKETING IN THE FURNITURE AND JOINERY INDUSTRY

7.1 Large furniture organisations sell their products either by private arrangement or by tender. Many of these, too, have show rooms away from the workshops where they display and sell their products. The majority of the smaller producers, however, prefer to sell off the workshops in order to avoid many overhead costs.

7.3 On the other hand, selling of furniture and joinery made by individuals in the country-side is somewhat haphazard. The individuals concerned compete with each other and as a result, most of them sell their products at a loss. Because of this, an attempt has been made with little success by the Government to organise them into co-operatives on district basis.

## 8. POSSIBLE FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FURNITURE AND JOINERY INDUSTRY

8.1 The Forest Department regards among many things, the following projects as likely to be viable in order to develop the industry:

8.1.1. In order that dried timber is used in this industry so as to improve the quality of the products, a number of wood seasoning kilns should be established. Currently very little timber is used "dry".

8.1.2. A high quality veneer producing plant;

8.1.3. A high quality plywood producing factory;

8.1.4. A special general purpose painted factory;

8.1.5. A high quality furniture producing plant;

8.1.6. A furniture repair and maintenance workshop.

8.1.7. A plant producing coat hangers, measuring rulers and tool handles.

9. CONCLUSION

The furniture and joinery industry like any other wood processing industry in Uganda, could extricate itself from its confines with the stimulation of investment, provision of progressive management and improved technical know-how provided in the short and long run, both domestic and foreign markets are of promise.





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