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*for a sustainable future*

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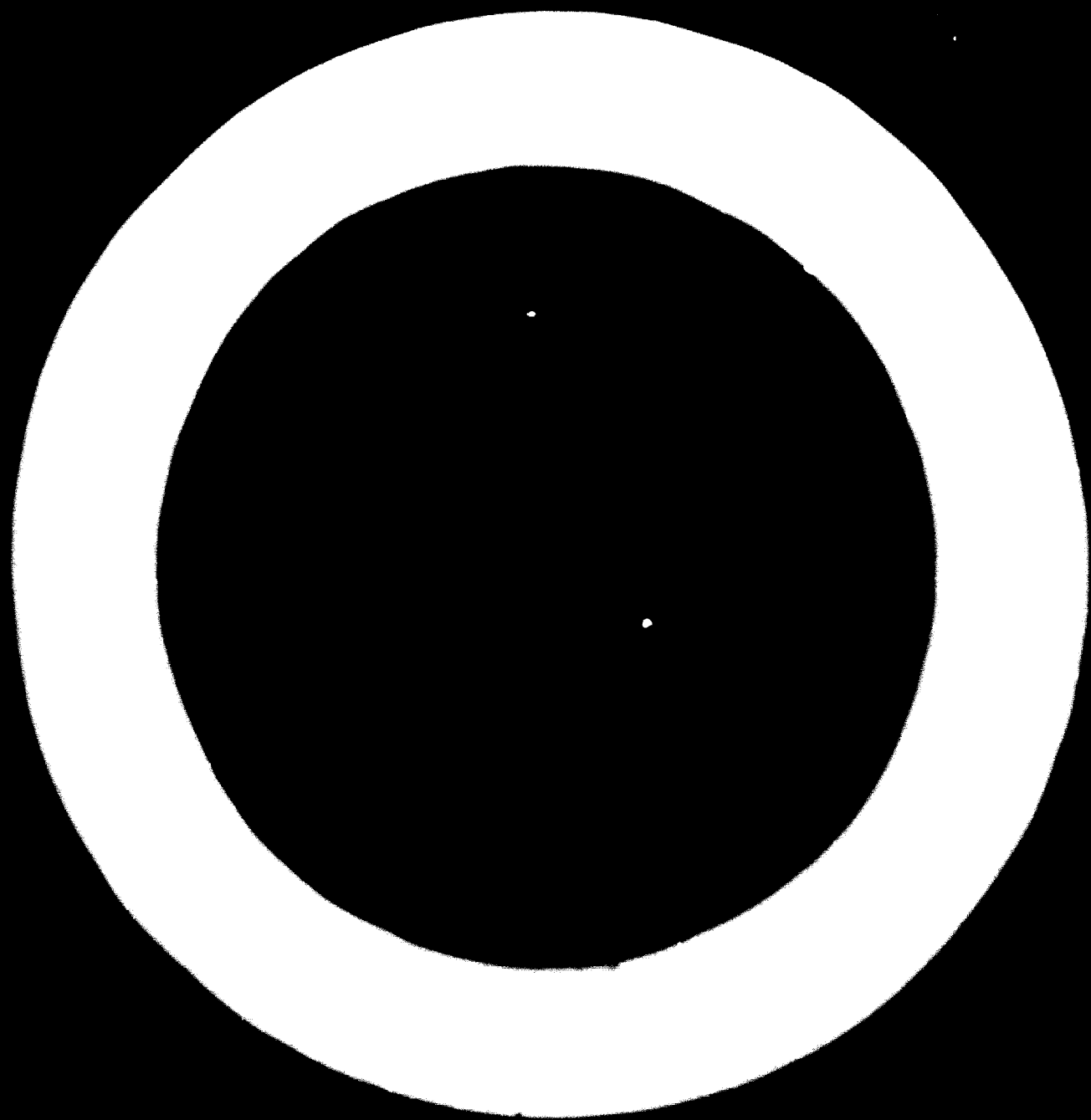
THE FURNITURE AND JOINERY INDUSTRIES IN  
THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA 1/

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## 1. Historical Review

In Korea, during ancient times, furniture was used by the nobility to show their authority and to impress the people they ruled with their dignity, as was done in other countries. The common people, of course, were unable to afford furniture, therefore, furniture building techniques were not widespread.

On the other hand, due to the common peoples' mode of living and environment, with its limited space, only a minimum of furniture was needed. In the average house, one would find a low table for eating, (chairs being unnecessary since the floors were heated with the original "radiant-heating" system, known in Korea as "ondol" heating), a chest in which clothes were stored, a rice chest to keep the rice free of fungus and occasionally, a low credenza for books and papers.

Furniture design was originally influenced by the Chinese and by the altar fittings in the Buddhist temples. Gradually the design was modified and simplified until it reached the traditional Korean shape and character.

## 2. Recent Performance

By 1910, as Korea began to open her doors toward western civilisation, western designs became more prominent and new techniques in furniture construction were learned. However, western-type furniture was used primarily in schools, hospitals and other public facilities, whereas the furnishings in private homes remained virtually unchanged.

From 1910 until after the Korean War, the furniture industry remained practically unchanged, with one exception when a modern factory was established in 1940. After the Korean War, rapid westernisation, in all areas, some of which was very productive and realistic, occurred and as a result there was an increased demand for western-styled furniture.

Many furniture factories, ranging from cottage-scale to medium-sized, were established. Because of this increased

demand, design-wise, these neophyte-manufacturers only copied without giving consideration to the function or human engineering involved in furniture design.

### 3. Present situation

With the advent of the military Government in 1961, a new era, in all aspects of life, social, economical and educational, came into being. As the G.N.P. rises, the livelihood and social system, in general, becomes better and more people are able to enjoy a more comfortable life. Better housing is available and naturally, a better quality of furniture is desired.

However, the phenomenon of high-income people requiring de-luxe furniture and low-income people being able to afford only poor quality furniture exists, therefore, furniture companies equipped with modern machinery and modern techniques co-exist with infant ones. Strangely enough, they are still competitive to each other in profit-making.

However, we believe the latter group will be defeated by the former in competition. Quality-made items, in any society and Korea is no exception, usually win over poorly made ones.

### 4. Market

The Republic of Korea has about 95,000 sq.km. of land with a population of 35 million and the G.N.P. in 1971 was about 10 billion US Dollars.

However, the purchasing power is still concentrated in the large cities, because of the large gap in the people's income in the large cities and the small and between cities and rural areas. Furthermore, the traditional way of living remains unchanged among half of the population; they still use only a few pieces of furniture. Most of the large furniture makers are concentrated in the few large cities, where they fill the role of manufacturers and retailers. The furniture market is

so small in Korea, that if they mass-produced items, they would have difficulty in selling them. Some minor retailers buy the goods produced by small manufacturers who employ only a few workers. Considering the above mentioned conditions, we do not expect a rapid expansion of the furniture market in the near future.

5. Furniture industry

A) Wood species for furniture

1. Local wood - zelkova, oak, elm, lime, maple, pine, paulownia, walnut.
2. Imported wood - teak, ching chang, pradu, mai payen, lauan, other hardwoods.

B) Finish of furniture - lacquer (colour and natural), oil finish, cathew finish (colour and natural)

C) Adhesives - Animal glue, urea resin, P.V.A., epoxy resin, phenol resin.

D) Statistics

1. Summary figure of wood products and furniture by year

(Unit - Million Won)

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Establishments</u>	<u>No. of Workers</u>	<u>Employees remuneration</u>	<u>Product Cost</u>	<u>Value shipped</u>	<u>Value produced</u>	<u>Value added of inventory</u>	<u>Change</u>
1968	2,036	41,489	3,772	29,299	43,777	44,081	14,152	764
1969	2,002	44,187	5,845	42,997	54,918	57,357	14,359	2,213
1970	2,078	45,230	6,787	52,692	69,778	72,180	19,487	3,903

2. Summary figure by type of ownership (Unit-Million Won)

(Wood products and furniture)

<u>Ownership</u>	<u>No. of establishment</u>	<u>No. of Workers</u>	<u>Employees remuneration</u>	<u>Production cost</u>	<u>Value shipped</u>	<u>Gross output</u>	<u>Value added</u>
Joint Stock Co.	71	20,963	3,593	31,975	38,660	40,861	8,886
Other Corporations	8	158	27	253	355	361	107
Individuals	1,929	24,109	3,167	20,463	30,763	30,956	10,493

3. Summary figure by size of workers (Unit-Million Won)  
(Wood products and furniture)

<u>Size of workers</u>	<u>No. of establishments</u>	<u>No. of Workers</u>	<u>Employees remuneration</u>	<u>Products cost</u>	<u>Value shipped</u>	<u>Gross output</u>	<u>Value added</u>
5 - 9	1371	9257	923	4,515	7,241	7,251	2,736
10 - 19	467	6021	679	3,220	5,200	5,208	1,987
20 - 49	124	3528	447	2,646	3,638	3,825	1,179
50 - 99	15	884	175	1,496	1,715	1,905	409
100-199	10	1450	239	1,060	1,642	1,667	606
200-499	6	1795	282	1,224	1,919	2,010	802
500-up	13	22295	4,039	38,529	48,420	50,245	11,684

4. Summary indicator per establishment and worker  
(Unit-Thousand Won) Furniture Only

<u>No. of Workers</u>	<u>Average per establishment</u>			<u>Average per employee</u>		
	<u>Gross Output</u>	<u>Value Added</u>	<u>Inventory</u>	<u>Remuneration</u>	<u>Gross Output</u>	<u>Value Added</u>
10	4,819	2,240	558	122	574	267

5. Number of establishments for furniture

<u>Joint Stock Co.</u>	<u>Other Corporations</u>	<u>Individuals</u>	<u>Total</u>
8	1	776	785

All data derived from Ministry of Economic Planning Board, Republic of Korea.

6. Furniture industry prospects

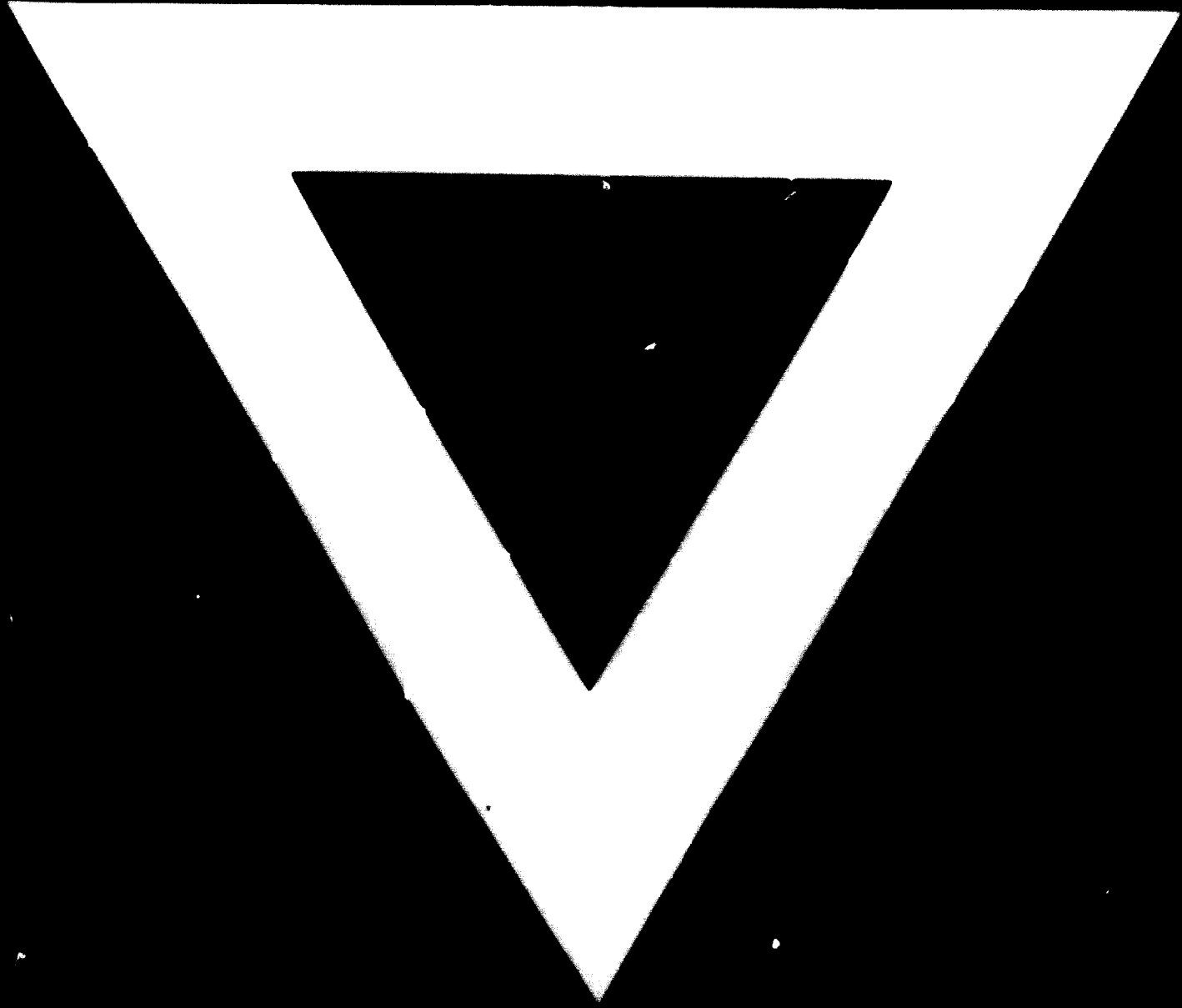
All factors considered, the way of living, people's earnings, purchasing power and lack of capital presently put a curb on the rapid growth of the furniture industry.

However, we do feel we have a bright future, due to the fact that there are abundant labourers who are well trained, skilled and diligent and because of the rapid growth of the G.N.P., which will be 24 Billion US Dollars after the fulfilment of the fourth



Economic Development Plan in the 1960's. By that time, it is estimated that the demand for household furniture will be double.





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