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THE FURNITURE AND JOINERY INDUSTRIES
IN INDONESIA ^{1/}

by

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The Current Situation

The furniture and joinery industries in Indonesia are in the first stages of development and are far from mechanized. Most of the wood industries are located in the major cities, such as Jakarta - the capital of Indonesia, Medan, Surabaya, Semarang, Bandung and other capitals of the provinces.

With the introduction of Act No. 1/1967 on foreign investment, the Government invited foreign capital to operate in Indonesia. The situation changed abruptly and much foreign capital has been pouring into the country in various fields of activities. This development can be marked by the booming situation in every sector. Many big office buildings, hotels, hospitals, new factories, modern airport facilities and so on are constructed in big cities, especially in Jakarta and its surrounding area.

This kind of development unavoidably increases the need for the furniture and joinery industries to supply various types of furniture. It was responsible for the introduction of mechanization in the wood industry, especially since 1969 when much foreign capital started to contribute to the exploitation of the forests of Kalimantan and Sumatra. However most foreign enterprises in forest exploitation are aimed at export of logs, principally those of Japan, the Philippines and Korea. Only a relatively small portion of these woods are consumed by domestic furniture manufacturers.

Transportation is a big problem facing this activity. Logs are transported from rural areas in Sumatra and Kalimantan to the surrounding towns on the coastline of the islands and most are transported by ships abroad, while only a small part is transported or shipped again to the major cities in Java, Sulawesi, Sumatra, etc. for the furniture manufacturing and building materials industries. Transportation of logs for export purposes is now done by at least 25 ships of 7,000 to 10,000 tons weight. Japan imports 18 million cubic metres of meranti annually from Kalimantan.

Up till now most wood manufacturing is by saw mills, but furniture manufacturing is growing very fast, coincident with the booming Indonesian economy. They are trying to mechanize their industries step by step, but most of them are as yet home industries due to shortages of capital and lack of technical competence.

At the present time the Indonesian wood industries can be listed as: plywood, wooden cases, wooden building materials, sawnwood, furniture, prefabricated materials, hardboard, matches, pencils, etc. Although complete statistical data on each is not available, they all have encouraging prospects for the future.

The Department of Industry and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry are the only bodies which take care and supervise the development of furniture manufacturing activities. The former is a governmental and the latter a non-governmental body and actually have a limited contribution in guiding and directing its development. There is no other special board or body entrusted to give direction to the growth of such an industry. However, in the timber enterprises there is an association called INDOTA - Indonesian Timber Association. This association is specifically designed for the interests of timber entrepreneurs but still does not cover the activities of the furniture and joinery industries.

The Department of Industry cannot cover the entire scope of activities in this field and thus a special board or body to organize and guide the furniture and joinery industries is needed. Such a board should be involved in furnishing the urgent needs in furniture technology, production management, low cost automation, marketing research, problems in export trade, research, surveys and other related fields.

An example can be taken from England: there are now at least 11 regional furniture manufacturers associations which are united into the British Manufacturers Federated Association. It comprises both manufacturers and retailers. The furniture industry is supported and assisted by two outstanding organizations: the Furniture Industry Research Association (FIRA) and the Furniture Development Council (FDC). These two organizations collect and redistribute much technical and business data to their members. Its membership includes almost half the furniture companies of Britain that collectively account for nearly four-fifths of total annual turnover.

FIRA deals with the technical problems, research on timber properties, finishes and upholstery and tests the strength of joints and structures. FDC engages in research on management techniques, more accurate costing methods, collection of business figures, developing better training procedures and industrial safety and planning better layouts.

How is this developed in other industrialized countries? It would be of great advantage to all participants if relatively complete data could be presented on these two organizations. In so doing we can make a comparative study of which types of techniques are suitable for the various developing countries to help progress in the furniture and joinery industries.

Production

Most of the activities in the wood industry in Indonesia are focused on production planning, based in certain orders which can be characterized into two general groups: antiques and modern furniture. Each of these can be divided into: complete furnishing and individual furnishing. The former can include: living rooms, bedrooms, kitchens, including built-in kitchens. Individual furnishing can account for seats for rooms and kitchens, upholstered chairs, stools and benches. Upholstered furniture includes such items as settees, sofas, couches, beds, etc. Excluded from this group are bed tables, school and office desks.

Raw Materials

Indonesia is a country rich in natural resources, especially forest resources, which occur over most of the archipelago and supply an abundance of relatively unexploited raw materials for the furniture industries. Some of the best timbers are jati/teak, meranti, saninten, sonokeling, mahony, duren, agatis.

Furniture manufacturing also consumes important quantities of plywood, plastic, metal square tubes, pipes, photography applied to plastic material (Formica, Thermopol, Ultrapas, Hosnitex), foam rubber, wool and vinyl.

It is common that the woods which are commercialized in the market are not dry enough, thus lowering the quality of the material. Wood preservation is still very scarce in Indonesia and needs further development. Good quality woods used for furniture, handicrafts, household utensils, building materials, etc. must be dried and also preserved. Both the pressure and soaking methods are used to preserve wood in Indonesia: (a) by a chemical dissolved into water and (b) by a chemical dissolved into oil.

In preserving woods which are to be painted, a chemical dissolved into water (e.g. Superwolmanquilt and Tanalith) is best used, whereas in preserving woods which are for use in open air, such as telephone poles, electrical masts and railway ties (sleepers) it is recommended to use a chemical dissolved in oil.

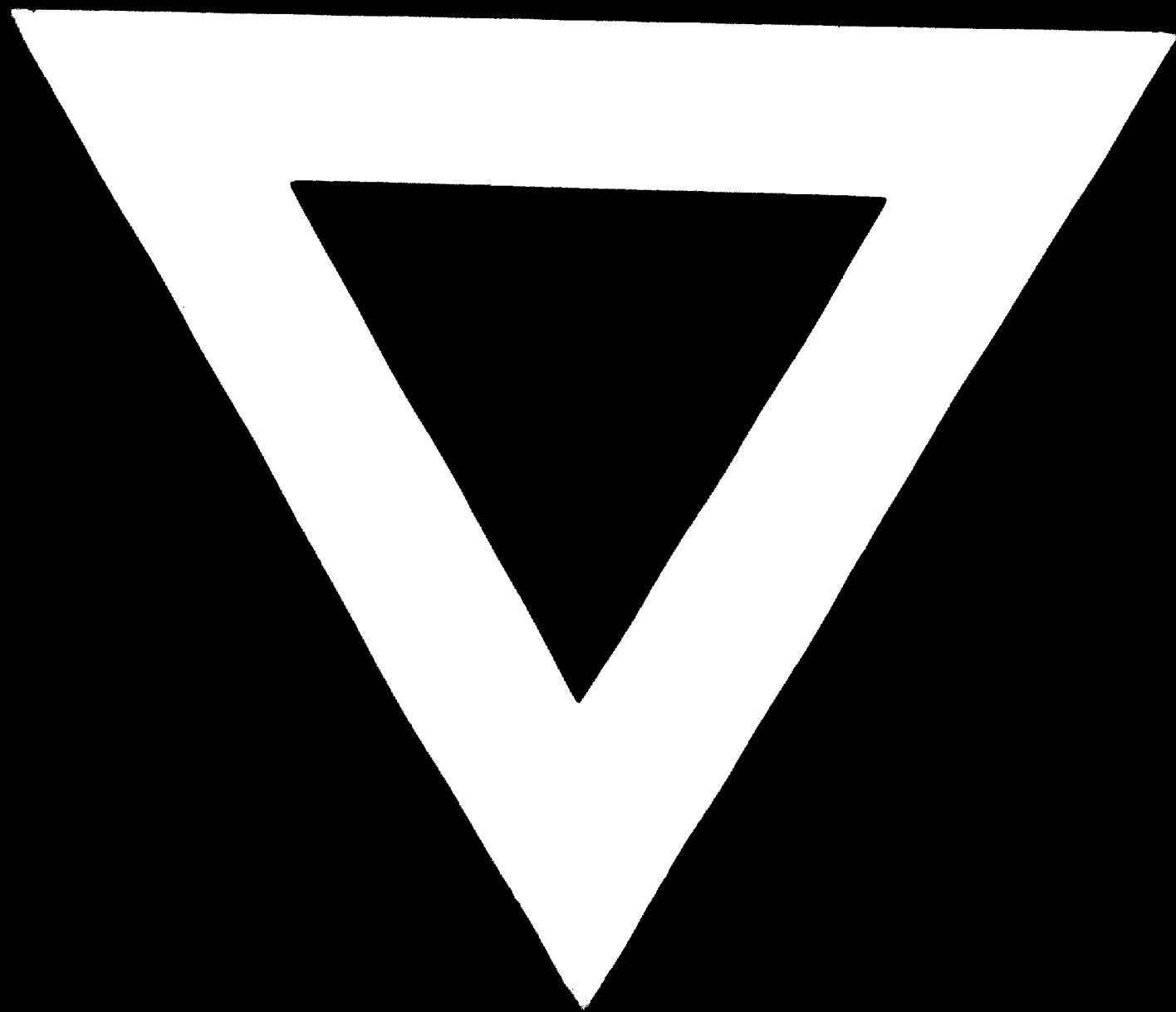
Another problem to which I would like to draw your attention is that of waste and remnants. Every saw mill has its wastes and remnants of 50 cm. to 1 metre or more which are not used for furniture or other articles. These remnants sometimes become hilly and mountainous in the surrounding plant site and take up alot of space. To throw them away will also be a problem, since there is no special place, as there is for garbage, or we feel pity for them as they are usually from good quality woods such as teak. They used to be used as materials for handiocrfts, household utensils, etc., but I would like to invite suggestions on how this problem of wastes can be overcome.

The Prospect

Based on the facts that Indonesia is so vast, rich in terms of her enormous natural resources, especially in the variety of forestry woods, has a large population and is run by a relatively stable government which is now involved in executing the second Five-year Plan in every sector, conditions are favourable for economic development. The only things lacking are the capital and technological competency; foreign capital investment based on mutual benefits are warmly invited.

The author feels that UNIDO technical assistance could contribute greatly to the development of the furniture and joinery industries in developing countries.





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