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The Influence of Scandinavian Furniture Design in the Development of Modern Rattan Furniture in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

In Indonesia, rattan is one of the natural resources used for furniture materials such as wood. Therefore, rattan furniture has long been developed since the traditional model and developed rapidly in the era of modern design. In the period of traditional furniture, rattan furniture was viewed as cheap furniture, quickly damaged and therefore rarely used for middle-class home furnishings. With the efforts of several design lecturers who are also furniture designers, rattan furniture was then developed with a modern design approach with influence from Scandinavian furniture design. As a result, modern rattan furniture can be accepted into middle-upper class. This study aim is to examine the influence of Scandinavian furniture design particularly Danish furniture design in the early development of modern rattan furniture design in Indonesia. The influence will be describe in two ways those are product design concepts acquired from Scandinavian design media and academic influence from Indonesian designer who study in Scandinavian countries and develop the rattan furniture in Indonesia. This paper uses the comparative study method to gain an understanding and description of Indonesian rattan furniture design with the influence of Scandinavian furniture design especially Denmark. The result show that Indonesian furniture designers are able to adopt the characteristics of modern Scandinavian furniture design that is generally made of wood into the modern design of rattan furniture.

Keywords: Development, Furniture Design, Modern Rattan Furniture, Scandinavian Design.

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1. Introduction

In the discourse of modern furniture design, it is obvious that Scandinavian furniture design appears to be one of the world's icon in modern design (Sparke, 1998). Their products, especially from Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland influence spread all over ther world including Indonesia. Scandinavian furniture design marked by clean lines, functional furnishings, mostly used natural material that is wood and with modern style approach With a focus on craftsmanship, materials, and

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clean lines, the philosophy behind the style remains relevant today (Meaghan, 2017). The Scandinavian design was also heavily influenced by the Nordic region's cold, short winter days and a desire for interiors to be cozy, a term what in Danish called *hygge* (Jamaludin et. al, 2007).

In addition to developing wooden furniture and various effort undertaken (Puspita et.al, 2016) Indonesia also developing rattan furniture with modernism approach. Indonesia is the country of rattan. About 85% world rattan produced in Indonesian forest in Java, Sumatera, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Papua (Jamaludin, 2006), (de Gier, 2017). This natural resources has long been used as trading commodity and traditionally used as material for furniture. To develop modern rattan furniture design, Indonesia requires a furniture design reference that is suitable to the existing conditions of the furniture industry that still rely on craftsmanship and simple technology.

According to Nicolai de Gier (2017) Indonesian designers are not so interested on furniture design using rattan and not familiar with the global design trends. This is not really true. This paper is to explain the way Indonesian designer develop since 1970s and brought the rattan furniture into modern design until now. This paper examines the orientation in design style of early modern rattan furniture development in Indonesia that is referred to international trends. The aim of this paper is to describe early stage of the influence of Scandinavian furniture design in the development of modern rattan furniture design in Indonesia. The development mentioned here is the first stage that was pioneered by Imam Buchori Zainuddin in the early 1970s. The aim of this paper is to examine the extent to which the influence of the Scandinavian furniture design in the development of modern rattan furniture design Indonesia.

2. The early scandinavian furniture development

At the beginning of the industrial era, Scandinavia was influenced predominantly by the British Art & Craf Movement approach led by William Morris and by Deutscher Werkbund in Germany. Later, when the Bauhaus 'technological' approach began to spread throughout Europe, Scandinavian furniture designers focused more on the Vienna School of a 'design school' developed by Wiener Werkstätte in Vienna Austria. The Vienna School is considered the ideal reference of Danish design and makes it an external reference, especially the breakthrough that Michael Thonet made in furniture design (Dormer, 1993). In term of modern style, Scandinavian accepted the influence of Bauhaus modernism with a more organic approach by using natural material such as wood rather than industrial such as steel (Woodham, 1997). This approach pioneering by Kaare Klint who then became the the founder of Danish modern furniture design (Mang, 1979), (Dormer, 1993), (Sparke, 1998). The developing Scandinavian design refers on the general attitude in the development of aesthetic values ie a) values craftsmanship, b) high appreciation of nature and c) appreciation to the designer's imagination. These three things are politically and culture distinguishes Scandinavian designs with designs from European countries others (Woodham, 1997).

One of Danish prolific furniture design was Hans J. Wegner (1914-2007). His work includes 500 design objects, some of which are classic designs and are continuously manufactured and worn as they relative to the period when craftsmanship, traditional values, and modern life can co-exist in harmony. His favorite material is wood oak, beech, teak, ash and maple, but in the mid-1960s, he also started working with plywood. Wegner developed a large number of solid wood design seats that all have their own uniqueness. All of his works have in common that each backrest is not solid, making it easy to combine and to create harmony in different types of environments (Jamaludin, et al, 2007).

Strength and functionality are key requirements for Wegner, as well as timelessness. Natural warmth and balanced character are implied in his works as Wegner understands the characteristics of wood including the possibilities and limitations of wood materials. For Wagner, wood is the most natural material of all materials. Wegner's remarks on his attitude toward wood were the main medium for realizing his design idea based on the fact that in general wherever it comes from, humans tend to like wood materials. Humans tend to hold, touch, lash, and smell the wood (Bensen, 1994).

3. Methods

To gather the Scandinavian influence, especially Danish furniture design and the development of modern rattan furniture in Indonesia, I used critical analysis based-on historical method of Charles

Busha and Stephen Harter (Palmquis, 1997). Comparative study used to find the significant influence in form of similarities and differences characteristic between Scandinavian furniture design, particularly Danish furniture design and early development of modern rattan furniture in Indonesia. Discussion focused on the early development of modern rattan furniture design in Indonesia and the influence of Scandinavian furniture design explored through the work of early modern Indonesian rattan furniture designer.

An interview conducted to Imam Buchori Zainuddin and Gorm Harkær. Imam Buchori Zainuddin who extensively involved in the early development of modern rattan furniture design in Indonesia. He was a professor in Product Design department ITB and also a pioneer of modern rattan furniture design in Indonesia. Gorm Harkær is the author of monograph on Kaare Klint (klintiana.dk).

4. Result and discussion

The Scandinavian design influence comes to Indonesia in two ways, product design concept and academic influence. The first comes in the form of promotion media and products of Scandinavian furnitures. The second, academic influence that is the Scandinavian design spirit acquired by Indonesian who studied design in Scandinavian countries, brought home and disseminated through design work and education in design school (Jamaludin, 2001).

4.1 The influence of Scandinavian furniture design

It was a astounding news when Gorm Harkær, the author of *Kaare Klint* (klintiana.dk), explained that Kaare Klint, in 1915 visited and stayed in Semarang Central Java Netherlands-Indies (now Indonesia). During his stay in Semarang, besides visiting Borobudur temple, Klint reused the drawing of the Faaborg chair for Knud Gjellerup, a Danish who lived in Java and worked as medical doctor for the Netherlands colonial government. After Klint has left, Knud Gjellerup ordered 6 chairs by local cabinetmakers in solid teak. Gjellerup retired in the 1930's and brought the furniture to Denmark (Harkær, 2017, personal communication).

According to Gordon Campbell (2006), during a stay in Java (1914-1916), Kaare Klint made contact with a firm of Chinese cabinet maker who made furniture to his designs. The arrival of Kaare Klint to Java and what he did in Semarang with his Faborg chair, however, could be mentioned as the first contact between Danish furniture designer and his design with the Indonesian furniture craftsmanship. This is important fact about Scandinavian and Indonesian link in furniture design world and can be seen as an early direct influence.

In northeast of Semarang there is Jepara, a district where known as the centre of wood carved furniture long before Dutch colonial era (Puspita et al, 2016). Based on nature of local people who revel products from outside, I assumed there were more Faborg chairs or chairs that inspired by Faborg chair have made in original design or modification by local cabinet makers after Gjellerup left. Unfortunately, there have been no studies on the influence of Kaare Klint work on the development of the wood furniture design in Indonesia. If Kaare Klint left inheritance in Java and can be tracked, this is a tremendous boon to the development of wood furniture design Indonesia. Further research is needed to trace the inheritance of this Klint's work, particularly in Jepara.



Figure 1: Faaborg chair by Kaare Klint (left) and one of chairs made in Jepara (right)

4.1.1 Product design concept: Promotion media and marketing

In 1970s, Indonesian architect, designers and design enthusiast learn and acquired the Scandinavian design from Scandinavian design media that comes to Indonesia. They are *Design from Scandinavia*, *Living Architecture*, *Design from Finland* and others design periodical or design books. Those

all promote Scandinavian design that also disseminate design concepts or 'ideology' of Scandinavian modern furniture design. One example of Scandinavian furniture design is Charlottenborg chair designed by Arne Jacobsen in 1936. This is a modern example of how rattan can be used for modern furniture. This rattan chair is very close to Indonesian condition as rattan producer and this encouraging Indonesian designers to develop modern rattan furniture design.



Through media, the Scandinavian modern design penetrates the taste of Indonesian architects and designers. The result is Scandinavian design has long been admired among Indonesian architects and designers. Scandinavian design offers the modernity value that is simplicity, with appreciation to the value of craftsmanship yet beautiful. In 1975, the design lecturers of Design department of Institute of Technology Bandung (ITB) held a furniture design exhibition. The works on display look Scandinavian design influence, particularly in relation to the organic form (plasticity) and natural materials. Local approach found from the use of materials such as rattan and Indonesian wood that explicitly also has indicated the character of craftsmanship (Jamaludin, 2011).

Figure 2: Charlottenborg chair, Arne Jacobsen, 1936 (sika-design.com)

Recent example, the Mayor of Bandung city, Ridwan Kamil, an architect, filled his office with Scandinavian furniture. He puts the Egg chair designed by Arne Jacobsen in his house and also in his office, Bandung city hall.

In the field of marketing design, with the increasing of prosperity of Jakarta, Bang & Olufsen has opened the store in Jakarta on July 2001 and Fritz Hansen has opened officially their Jakarta store in December 2014. Also in 2014, some Scandinavian furniture companies, Jysk from Denmark has opened stores in Jakarta and Surabaya and IKEA from Sweden, opened in Alam Sutera near Jakarta.



Figure 3: Left, The Mayor of Bandung welcoming the Bandung citizen in his office with The Egg in front of him (twitter.com). Right, he received guest on the Eggs (tribunnews.com)

4.1.2 Academic influence: Acquired Scandinavian spirit

The second influence is academic influence, directly acquired by Indonesian who had the opportunity to study design in Denmark and other Scandinavian countries. Design learning experience in the Scandinavian countries can absorb their design spirit. The first Indonesian who studied design in Scandinavian countries was Imam Buchori Zainuddin. He was graduated from Art Education study program, Art and Design Department Institute of Technology Bandung (ITB). After graduated, he taught there and made and sold plywood furnitures and lighting design. In 1970 he was appointed as exhibition officer of Indonesian Pavilion in World Expo Osaka Japan. This seven months experience added his design insight.

In 1972 Imam Buchori, who admired Scandinavian design, got scholarship to study Industrial Design in Arkitektsskole Copenhagen. His lecturers were Prof. Erik Herlow and Prof. Victor Papanek, a visiting professor from USA who gave Imam Buchori influence in design theory and praxis which carries social issues in third world. During stayed in Copenhagen, Imam Buchori observed the Danish modern furniture from showroom around Stroget. He was interested in the work of Hans J. Wegner and Finn Juhl (Zainuddin, 2017, personal communication). When he returned to ITB he taught at Industrial Design department which opened in 1972 in Faculty of Art and Design. He combined the knowledge he gained from Prof. Herlow and Prof. Papanek and Denmark modern design spirit.

In addition to teaching, he also works as rattan furniture designer for a factory in Jakarta. In academical field, in Faculty of Art and Design ITB and other design schools in Bandung, furniture design taught in the Interior Design Department in three-four subjects. From stool, kitchen set,

wardrobe/cabinet and easy chair design. The main approach is modern Scandinavian design, by adopting some local elements.

4.2 The early development of modern rattan furniture in Indonesia

The development of modern rattan furniture design in Indonesia started in 1973. Institute for Research, Education and Information of Social and Economy (LP3S), and Frederich Neuman Stiftung from German, both non-governmental organizations, asked Imam Buchori Zainuddin to coordinated a training for rattan craftsmen from Tegalwangi Cirebon, center of rattan industry in Indonesia, with his colleagues of Faculty of Art and Design ITB. For six months about 56 rattan craftsmen from Cirebon trained in ITB. They trained to know and understand design drawing, material and new finishing technique and also business management. Imam him self knew closer rattan and processing rattan product during this training. This training purposes was to change the image of Tegalwangi rattan products that seem cheap, easily discarded, outdated, into a new image and durable as indoor furniture and meet the tastes of high society.

The results of this training later on display at Taman Ismail Marzuki Jakarta. The exhibition drew the attention of the public, the press and government agencies. Press comments generally emphasized their fresh changes in the aspects of design and product diversification were more diverse than the perception before against Tegalwangi rattan products that seem cheap and outdated at the time. Imam Buchori Zainuddin featuring one of his work and became one that got many orders from visitors (Zainuddin, 2016).

In 1974, one of Imam Buchori classmate in ITB, Farouk Kamal, one of five brothers who run wood furniture factory "Kamal furniture" in Jakarta asked Imam Buchori to develop rattan-based furniture product. One of the Kamal brothers, Taufik Kamal, studied architecture in Sweden and in factory he focused on creating machine for wood and rattan production process. As a first step, Imam Buchori used Scandinavian approach to modern design with emphasis on material issues those are material efficiency and structural or construction improvements towards a more functional (Jamaludin, 2001). This method produces rattan furniture design for the first time shows the structure without wrapped or covered by wicker. The elements were then seen as decor that resulting of the skeletal structure



Figure 4: Srigunting chair, 1973. The most favourite chair in exhibiton and became the milestones rattan chair design by Imam Buchori Zainuddin.

The rattan characteristic and bentwood have the ability to create curved line as a most common form of organic design The rattan characters that can be curved by simple technology, is one of the right media to produce organic shapes. The production method was developed to rationalize the production process and to produce the same product standards. With this rationalization of production methods, Imam Buchori saw the potential of rattan furniture to develop from craft area towards industrial design.

With this innovation, the design of the seat becoming more varied in terms of form but rational in terms of construction, different from the traditional rattan design characterized by the presence of decorative elements. Formalism approach gives a great influence on the development of rattan furniture design in Indonesia.

Another thing that Imam Buchori developed in the design of rattan furniture was in finishing matter. He started used various colors on finishing rattan furniture that were previously only present the natural color of rattan. In this way, the design of rattan furniture comes in a new spirit that tried sensitive to the development of modern times. His efforts gave a new modern shape to the design of rattan furniture in Indonesia (Industrial Design Dept., 2017).

Kamal furniture rattan furniture products soon became famous in the upper-middle class, and became the locomotive of rattan modern furniture industry. Each exhibition was held, Kamal furniture booth has always been a visitor destination. Then the work of Imam Buchori widely copied by furniture makers from Cirebon but never exactly the same, because Kamal furniture products used connection or

joint system that is not easily replicated and also upscale materials such as leather. Imam Buchori work as rattan furniture designer in Kamal furniture from 1974 to 1985.

4.3 Comparative study

To understand what Imam Buchori has been done in modernisation of Indonesian rattan furniture design, we have to look at his work and compare with Scandinavian furniture design, especially with Danish wood furniture design. The comparative study used to find the similarities and the differences between the work of Imam Buchori and Scandinavian furniture design. The differences is clear, that is in term of the material usage and the construction system as a consequence of material character. Scandinavian designers used wood and bentwood and Imam Buchori used rattan.

To understand the similarities, we may compare the work of Imam Buchori and Danish Furniture Designers. For example, the peacock chair of Hans J. Wegner could be inspired by Peacock rattan and/or Windsor chair. Imam Buchori created his version of Windsor chair with rattan. The basic shape of both chairs are the same with little difference. Construction of wood and rattan also make both different.

The PK 15 chair with bentwood by Poul Kjaerholm, 1978, and Pigeon chair with rattan by Imam Buchori, 1974 (figure 5) both seems inspired by Thonet chair. Bentwood and rattan in some extent has the ability to form the curves line. Rattan is weaker than wood so it needs additional supporting construction

In his one seat Spoke back chair, 1945 and produce in 1962 by Fredericia, Borge Mogensen used solid wood, while Imam Buchori, with his Oyster chair, 1977, had to compromise with rattan character. He put rattan to support the front and back sitting construction and also between left and right side foots. For backrest Imam Buchori let spokes in backrest without cushion.

In Wishbone chair which is an effort to simplify chinese chair into modern design, Hans J. Wegner put V shape wood for backrest under bentwood, while Imam Buchori with Bali chair put wicker for backrest. Both offers optimum level of functional structure.

In 1970s, the modern rattan furniture



Figure 5: Peacock chair by Hans J Wegner, solid wood, 1947 (left), Windsor chair, rattan, by Imam Buchori Z, 1978 (right)



Figure 6: PK 15 chair by Poul Kjaerholm, 1978, (right), Pigeon chair, Imam Buchori, 1974 (right)



Figure 7: Spoke back chair, Borge Mogensen, 1945/1960, (left), Oyster chair, Imam Buchori, 1977 (right)



Figure 8: Wishbone chair, Hans J. Wegner, 1950 (left), Bali Chair, 1982 (right)



Figure 9: (left-right) Shell chair, 1978; Komodo, 1980; Spider, 1976, Concord, 1980, design by Imam Buchori Zainuddin.

design emerged with the Scandinavian furniture design characteristic which emphasized the modest form, functional and clean, in Indonesian modern rattan furniture can be easily found from the work of Imam Buchori Zainuddin and also his colleagues in Design department of ITB Bandung. The chairs he designed are understandable for their rational construction, simplicity and comfortability, and those all as a result of compromise with rattan character as main material for construction.

5. Conclusion

The influence of Scandinavian design spread to Indonesia was met with enthusiasm. But to have a Scandinavian furniture products it took time to increase the prosperity that encourage the purchasing power of good design. After prosperity is achieved, Scandinavian furniture design today can already be found in major cities of Indonesia.

In other hands, Indonesian architect and designer have the ability to absorb ideas from the outside in this case from the Scandinavian furniture design to be developed into the design of furniture with Indonesian rattan material. the ability of Indonesian furniture designers with local artistic flavor combined with the modern approach of Scandinavian furniture design that prioritizes simplicity and good function, can be said to successfully create the design of modern Indonesian rattan furniture.

The design of modern Indonesian rattan furniture is growing rapidly in present day due to the emergence of young designers who are interested to develop rattan furniture designs. They established the Indonesian Association of Furniture Designer to continue on study and developing modern Indonesian furniture including rattan furniture. One of Indonesian young designer is Adhi Nugraha, he was Prof. Imam Buchori Zainuddin's student who then becomes a lecturer in Product Design department. He took Master and Ph.D degree in University of Industrial Art Helsinki (now Aalto University) and involved in Indonesian modern rattan furniture design as the next generation furniture designer. This means that the spirit of the Scandinavian furniture design continues in Indonesia.

Although in Indonesia furniture design course mostly is in Interior Design department, as far as I have observed, furniture designers in Indonesia mostly graduated from Product Design department. This shows that furniture design in Indonesia is a design object that is very interesting among designers and architects.

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