

# **Preserving Tradition in Craft Design Development**

(Case Studies: Yamanaka Lacquerware, Japan and  
Tasikmalaya Bamboo Weaving, Indonesia)

MEIRINA TRIHARINI

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# 博士論文

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金沢大学大学院人間社会環境研究科

人間社会環境学専攻

学 籍 番 号

1 2 2 1 0 7 2 0 1 0

氏 名

MEIRINA TRIHARINI

主任指導教員名

鏡味 治也

## Table of Content

Chapter One: Introduction	3
1. Research background	3
2. Definition of Craft	5
3. Research Purposes	8
4. Rationale for the Research	9
5. Methodology	10
6. Outline of the Dissertation	11
7. Delimitation of Scope	11
Chapter Two: Case Study from Japan	12
1. Overview	12
2. Historical Context of Japanese Traditional Crafts	16
3. A Case Study on Yamanaka Lacquerware, Japan	24
3.1 History	24
3.2 Specialty of the Yamanaka Lacquer ware	27
3.3 Findings of the Fieldwork	28
4. Types of Yamanaka Lacquerware Products	44
Chapter Three: Case Study from Indonesia	48
1. Overview	48
2. History of Sunda, West Java	51
2.1 Sunda Culture	54

2.2 The Sundanese and Bamboo Culture	56
2.3 Bamboo Weaving Crafts in West Java	58
3. A Case Study on Tasikmalaya Bamboo Weaving, Indonesia	60
3.1 Overview	60
3.2 Bamboo Craftspeople	67
Chapter Four: Discussion	81
1. Japanese Traditional Craft	81
2. Indonesian Traditional Craft	86
3. Similarities of Japanese and Indonesia Traditional Crafts	90
4. Differences between Japanese and Indonesia Traditional Crafts	93
5. Conclusion	95
Chapter Five: Suggestions	99
References	107

## Chapter One: Introduction

### 1. Research background

“Craft” today has become a comprehensive concept denoting things produced. Making crafts depends on good materials and very specific tools. In addition, it depends on the skill and dexterity of the maker. Traditionally, craft activity was performed by rural people to fulfil their needs for everyday utensils. However, in this industrial era, where the need for daily utensils is easily fulfilled by industrial mass production, craft gradually lost its charm (Greenhalgh, 2002).

Traditional craft in Indonesia is a cultural activity that contributed to the production of artifacts that are cultural treasures. In an era where handmade processes have to compete with machine production, the existence of traditional craft is threatened. Among the numerous handmade objects considered as traditional crafts, only a few are able to compete economically against modern artifacts, such as the batik, jewelries, traditional textiles, rattan, and so on. These crafts have struggled and only achieved a respectable position in the market through redesigning. These crafts’ quality has improved, and their traditional characteristics have enabled them to compete with mass-produced products. Other kinds of traditional crafts, such as the written batik, *keris*, and the silverwork of Yogyakarta, never lost enthusiasts because they have preserved the originality from past eras. However, there is still much potential in an abundance of Indonesian traditional crafts that have struggled in the confusion of the current context.

The government, for example, has attempted to promote traditional crafts as an economic commodity through the empowerment of small-scale industry, along with other commodities, such as food and traditional medicine. Academic institutions have been researching the methods of improving the design of crafts and management

of their industries. Moreover, much academic research has attempted to empower the makers of traditional crafts, partly by providing a proper process for redesigning traditional crafts (Nugraha, 2010), and also by trying out different approaches to develop the crafts (Triharini, 2011; Zulaikha, 2012).

Craft in Indonesia, and in other countries, not only consists of the traditional methods and practitioners, but also contemporary methods and practitioners. These two categories do not describe every sort of craft. Some crafts, for instance, borrow elements from both – for example, traditional crafts with developed techniques or contemporary crafts with traditional elements. There are at least three very essential points in a traditional craft: purposes, values, and skill. Traditional craft always has not only a use, but also the purpose of reproducing the traditional knowledge of the authentic culture in which the craft made. This purpose might be the same or different from one culture to another.

Traditional craft activity embeds values in the process of making crafts. These values include consistency, endurance, patience, accuracy, and the work ethic. These values are decreased for contemporary crafts, which are made with the assistance of technology.

Skill involves the ability of a craftsperson to create the desired object – in other words, to fashion the physical attributes of the object (line, shape, size, texture, and color). Skill includes the ability of the craftsperson to use certain tools with particular techniques. These characteristics of traditional crafts are also important to be promoted as their designs are developed.

## 2. Definition of Craft

The idea of craft has a long history. According to Greenhalgh (1997), the origin of the current concept of craft can be traced at least from the 18th century in the Britain. Craft, at that time, did not refer to any “specific methods, trades or object types. It had no constituency; it could be applied to any form of practice within the culture.” Greenhalgh added that craft, as a field, has three elements: decorative art, the vernacular, and the politics of works.

Craft as decorative art is different from fine art. In other words craft was, and is, the arts not fine. In this sense, even though craft was also recognized as “art”, the classification system refused to include “decorative art” within the art category. Art was divided into “fine arts,” which includes painting, sculpture, and so on, and “decorative arts,” which includes craft and architecture.

The second element, the vernacular, refers to “the cultural products of a community, things collectively made, spoken, and performed. It is as close to nature as a culture can get; the unselfconscious and collective products of a social group, unpolluted by outside influence” (Greenhalgh, 1997), or in other words, authentic products. The period when mass production started to become widespread in Europe, especially in Britain, a movement in reaction to industrialization was initiated to arouse the awareness of the importance of the authentic culture. This movement became known as the Arts and Crafts movement. A similar situation occurred in Japan, as the westernization occurred and mass produced products flooded the domestic market following the Meiji restoration. Craft re-appeared as a symbol of national identity, also known as the *mingei* movement. The fact that “the vernacular was noticed just when other forms of living began to destroy it” (Greenhalgh, 1997)

was demonstrated by these two big movements, which occurred in different continents and at different times.

The third element of craft, the politics of work, was basically generated by William Morris, who “channeled the whole of his vision of a better society through the need of engage in creative work.” He stated that “creative work would improve the environment, lead to an equitable system of the distribution of wealth, and generate psychologically fulfilled people.” People should do work that is not external to them, in which they can fulfil themselves and have a feeling of well-being. Work is a determinative factor for a community to be living prosperously, as long as people are employed humanely and creatively.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, these three elements were successfully constructed as “a theory and practice of ethical art.” These three elements created an ideal of craft, especially in the beginning of the Arts and Crafts Movement. However, in the latter period, craft faced changes, when a new conception of craft, without one of the three elements mentioned above, marked the beginning of “new systems of the art.” The new system is known as “a tripartite affair – art – craft – design” (Greenhalgh, 1997, 36-40). In the twentieth century, design was identical with industry, and designers were clearly distinguished from artists and craftspeople.

In order to grasp the contemporary sense of these three terms, I will quote the definitions of “art,” “craft,” and “design” from dictionaries.

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines “art” in this manner:

Art: something that is created with imagination and skill and that is beautiful or that expresses important ideas or feeling;

works created by artist: paintings, sculptures, etc., that are created to be

beautiful or to express important ideas or feelings;  
the methods and skills used for painting, sculpting, drawing, and so on;  
the conscious use of skill and creative imagination especially in the production  
of aesthetic objects

The same dictionary defines “art” in this way:

Art (noun): A visual object or experience consciously created through an  
expression of skill or imagination.

Meanwhile, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “art” is defined thusly:

Art: the expression or application of human creative skill and  
imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture,  
producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional  
power

In other words, art can be also said as a visual object or experience, which is created  
based on someone’s creative skill, idea, imagination and aims to serve the function of  
being beautiful or aesthetic.

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines “craft” in this manner:

Craft 1 (noun)

1: an activity that involves planning, making, or executing something in a  
skillful way by using hands : Dexterity;

a job or activity that requires special skill;

2 a: an occupation or trade requiring manual dexterity or artistic skill;

b plural: articles made by craftspeople; objects made by skillful use of the  
hands;

Craft 2 (verb) : to make or produce with care, skill, and ingenuity

The term, “craft,” was used from the 12th century and originated from the German.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it has similar meanings:

As noun 1: An activity involving skill in making things by hand;

2 (crafts): work or objects made by hand;

As verb: Exercise skill in making (an object), typically by hand

According to the definitions mentioned above, craft has two definitions—as an activity and as an object. It can be concluded that as an activity, craft involves skill in making, producing, or executing something by hand.

Finally, the definition of “design” according to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* is as follows:

Design (verb): to plan and make decisions about (something that is being built or created): to create the plans, drawings, etc., that show how (something) will be made;

To plan and make (something) for a specific use or purpose;

Design (noun): the way something has been made: the way the parts of something (such as building, machine, book, etc.) are formed and arranged for a particular use, effect, etc.: the process of planning how something will look, happen, be made, etc. : the process of designing something;

a drawing of something that is being planned or created

The art-craft-design system has developed in various discourses since the end of 1920s to date. Thus, ”craft” has been understood as if it can be entirely distinguished from “art.” Further, the classifications within the category of craft have been developed dynamically, according to the changes in the three elements of craft.

### **3. Research Purposes**

The objectives of this research are related to the development of the design of traditional craft and its preservation in Indonesia. It is expected that this research can provide consideration for designers who work on developing new designs for traditional crafts and for policy makers or NGOs who work on the efforts of preserving traditional craft as a cultural entity.

#### **4. Rationale for the Research**

Despite all the problems that have been faced by the craftsman in recent years, much research, numerous policies, and other efforts have provided good results, including the development of traditional craft design and the acceptance of traditional products by a wider market. Methods to develop the objects of traditional craft have been developed very effectively in various ways by engaging designers, artists, academicians, and cultural activists. Unfortunately, these improvements have had less of an impact on the craftsman than was expected. Improvements in the quality and acceptance of crafts by the market sometimes do not go in line with supportive efforts to preserve craft as a cultural resource. Without special efforts to preserve this aspect, traditional skills and knowledge are at risk of extinction. Still, these preservation efforts have hardly touched, much less improved, traditional crafts. Accordingly, what has been missing in previous and on-going efforts should be carefully evaluated. This evaluation, apparently, should not be focused on how the methods are applied; instead it requires the consideration of the subject of the traditional craft. In this sense, one has to reconsider the nature of traditional craft in the present context.

The three elements of craft identified by Greenhalgh – the decorative arts, the vernacular, and the politics of works – are the fundamental ideas of the nature of the craft. However, there are no compelling reasons why the elements are the ones that

traditional craft needs in the present context and in the future. The elements “had an ideological power that was generated from within” previous eras. Therefore, by examining the elements in the present context, we may also realize how we can utilize the previous concept to generate a more contemporary philosophy and concepts better fitted to the present and future context.

## **5. Methodology**

As mentioned earlier, this research aims to comprehend the characteristics and values of traditional craft. Moreover, because it is expected that the results will contribute to the efforts of preserving and/or promoting traditional craft through the development of design, a proper methodology to achieve the objectives becomes necessary. Design Anthropology is proposed as a methodology that can reframe both anthropology and design innovation as decolonized practices of cultural engagement (Tunstall, 2013).

Anthropological research uses ethnography as its main method; meanwhile, in Design Anthropology, ethnography is not just a method; instead, engaging with people as a form of correspondence becomes central to transformation. In this sense, by utilizing the ethnographic approach, we can document and understand cultures, which is an essential step to developing a design concept. The design not only has to be aesthetically well-designed in order to be accepted by the market, but also must have a social and cultural impact to the craftsman and the surrounding environment.

This research uses two case studies from Japan and Indonesia to provide a context to see the system and underlying principles. By focusing on and understanding more than one culture, it is expected that we can understand cultures generally.

## **6. Outline of the Dissertation**

This dissertation consists of five chapters: (1) Introduction; (2) Case study from Japan, Yamanaka Lacquer Ware; (3) Case study from Indonesia, Bamboo Crafts of West Java; (4) Discussion; and (5) Suggestions. Specifically, Chapter Two and Chapter Three include the historical background of the crafts and the findings from fieldwork. Chapter Four discusses traditional crafts in Japan and Indonesia, and comparison of the similarities and differences between both cases. Chapter Five consists of conclusion of the research and the suggestions to develop and preserve the traditional crafts in Indonesia.

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## **7. Delimitation of the Scope**

The research took one case study from Japan and one case study from Indonesia. The case study from Japan is represented by the traditional crafts Yamanaka lacquerware; meanwhile, the case study from Indonesia is represented by the bamboo weaving crafts from Tasikmalaya, West Java. Each case study case is presented regarding its history, a description of the craft, and the findings from fieldwork. The findings from fieldwork are analysed from cultural aspects.

## Chapter Two: Case Study from Japan

### 1. Overview

Modern Japanese design, as can be seen, does not feature colorful or grandiose appearances. Instead, it radiates a sort of emotional ambiance to those who use or see the designs. Foreigners perceive Japanese design elements as simple, natural, calm, and humble. Apparently, these principles are not only seen in the design, but also found in every aspect of Japanese life. These principles have been absorbed wholly within the life of the people for hundreds of years. Even the Japanese are sometimes not aware that they have been living life in a very particular way in this globalization era.

The Japanese are known for the concept of the “Way” as the tradition in any given art. One of the Ways is the Tea Way or *chado* (or *sado*). The culture of tea originally came from China as early as 300 BC. The tea ceremony originated in China. The Chinese tea ceremony used high-quality tea utensils and was defined by specific rules. Besides its healthy effect, the Chinese tea ceremony was closely related to the art of poetry or literature. Tea became a vehicle for humans to reach the conceptual illusion of a realm apart. The Tea Way in Japan went through a long process until finally gaining maturation and developing an original Japanese culture as one of the Ways. Japan imported Chinese customs and lifestyles, included the tea culture. Tea was a mystical medicine to nourish health among the monks and priests on Heian era along with the flourishing of Buddhism, Taoism, and other Chinese influences. In the Kamakura era, tea shifted into more of an ordinary drink with the emergence of the new warrior class. Instead of being a spiritual entity, tea changed to become something of the quotidian and rational world. These earlier and later conditions formed the tea culture on a higher dimension in Japanese life (Sen, 1998).

The Tea Way that we acknowledge today was a contribution of Murata Mokichi Shuko (1423-1502), Takeno Joo (1502-1555), and Sen Soeki Rikyu (1522-1591). Tea master Sen Soeki Rikyu, also known as Sen no Rikyu, perfected the fruition of the Way of Tea. The tea ceremony in the Muromachi era was included into the world of aestheticism, partly by praising rare Chinese objects. “Tea,” as asserted by Shuko, “is not game; is not technique; it is not entertainment.” Tea is a means of purifying one’s heart, and the religious content is most important. The entire concept of tea taught by Shuko was a reflection of Confucian ideals. Shuko was also a tea master who first introduced the concepts of *wabi* and *sabi* as the opposites of the worldly life and grandeur of perfection shown in Chinese tea utensils. The tools used by Shuko displayed peculiar and particularly delightful roughness with totally unglazed surfaces. Shuko then became a pioneer of a re-education of taste. From Shuko onwards, other Japanese arts, too, discovered the road which leads not by the Way of magnificent beauty but by the Way of simple beauty. Simple beauty means a beauty which does not impose on the appearance, yet attracts the eye and captivates the heart. It became a new ideal for the followers of the Tea Way: non-loudness, solemn beauty, perfect imperfection, “cool shrunkeness.”

The creation of a Way of Tea went through three critical stages of development. They were the birth (by Murata Shuko), the maturation (by Takeno Joo), and the fruition (by Sen Rikyu). The stage of realization of the Way of Tea that Rikyu perfected is what we acknowledge today as a Way of *Wabi* tea. Hideyoshi, the leader who Rikyu served tea for, owned a tearoom. The room was only three mats in size, but the floor mats were covered with a red fabric called orangutan skin, with an edging of gold brocade and stuffing of wadded silk. Gold foil covered the ceiling, walls, and the lattices of the sliding door, the *shoji*. The room was the representation

of authority and wealth. On the other hand, Rikyu's tearoom was only one and a half mats in size, and in a grass hut tea, as a symbol of powerlessness. The philosophy contained in the simplicity of Rikyu's grass hut tea was as follows:

*Chanoyu* in a small room means, first of all, to practice the austerities of Buddhism. To enjoy a splendid dwelling or a meal with rare delicacies is a trivial pleasure. A house suffices if it does not leak; a meal, if it satisfies hunger. It was the teaching of the Buddha and the essence of *chanoyu*.

Further, the tearoom owned by Hideyoshi represented tea and its origin, Chinese high culture, while, the tea represented by Rikyu seemed to contradict its origin. These two Ways of tea that flourished in the fruition stage of the Tea Way became the predecessors of two different styles in most Japanese arts: "refinement" and "roughness." Both styles represented beauty within the values of Japanese aesthetics. "Refinement," as mentioned earlier, originated from the influence of the Chinese high civilization that became the ideal of the old Japan. Meanwhile "roughness" appeared to be an opposition of a highly valued "refinement" that was very worldly and contradicted with the ideal of Buddhism. These contrasting values came into incubation in the Edo era. This incubation was one of the effects of Japan's isolation from other countries for 250 years under the rule of Tokugawa shogun (1603-1868). This isolation resulted in a transcendental understanding of the two values into a particular Japanese culture.

Japan began to open trade with other countries on 1850's when Europe and America pushed Japan to open its door to them. In 1868, the shogun handed over power to the emperor, which also known as the year of Meiji Restoration. Japan was facing rapid industrialization from that time to World War II. Responding to the westernization and internationalization as the effect of Meiji Restoration, a

philosopher and a critic, Yanagi Soetsu, coined the *mingei* movement to find the real Japanese values in 1920's. *Mingei* theory was introduced as the original and traditional Japanese philosophy of beauty. Yanagi theorized *mingei* as work of art that has supreme beauty. Yanagi also defined *mingei* as representing the most “innate and original Japan.” In 1926, Yanagi stated in the proposal for the establishment of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum that ordinary household objects handmade by unknown craftspeople (*getemono*) reflect a purely a Japanese world. Yanagi stated that:

*Getemono* clearly reveals the identity of our race with their beauty rising from nature and the blood of our homeland, not following foreign technique or imitating foreign countries. Probably these works show the most remarkable originality of Japan.

The Japan Folk Crafts Association was founded on 1934, and its objective was to revive *mingei* through the creation of new *mingei* (*shin-mingei*) and revitalize a depressed rural industry. The dissemination of *mingei* objects and *mingei* theory was done by through the making of guilds, model rooms, exhibitions, museums, publications, trade, and so forth. The new *mingei* movement turned out to be an influential inspiration of modern Japanese design.

Although recent studies of *mingei* philosophy argued that *mingei* is not uniquely Japanese (Moeran, 1984; Kikuchi, 2004), I do not intend to emphasize this argument. Instead, I will focus on how the *mingei* movement initiated the development of traditional crafts in Japan. *Mingei* became the most influential movement in raising the awareness of Japanese people of the originality of their culture through the traditional crafts.

## 2. Historical Context of Japanese Traditional Crafts

As mentioned earlier, in this paper I will focus on Yanagi's *mingei* theory. In order to understand the specifics of the *mingei* concept, one must understand the concepts of traditional crafts in Japan as a whole. In other words, to understand *mingei*, we have to examine the other concepts of Japanese traditional crafts, such as *kogei* (crafts). The following explanation is based on a study of the literature. The context is historical.

### 2.1 *Kogei* 工芸

*Kogei* is a general term of “craft” in Japanese today. In previous eras, *kogei* did not differentiate the concept of art and craft. It denoted the concept of “making things.” Originally it referred to actual things made through superior technology and skills or changes in the conditions that surround the outcome of such technology and skills. In other words, it has been defined heteronomously over time and is dependent on the skills of the historical period.

The term *kogei* first used around 1860's as a comprehensive concept ranging from manufacturing, technology, science, and engineering. The word also meant “industrial machine products” and “product design” in commercial and economic activities. *Kogei* also included various hand-made products. Later, *kogei* split into sub-classifications, such as *bijutsu kogei* (art crafts), *futsu kogei* (ordinary crafts), *sangyo kogei* (industrial crafts), *mingei*, and *shin kogei* (new crafts or studio crafts). The term *kogei* in general meant “product design” in contemporary technology. *Kogei* is also used in close association with official schemes for export.

*Kogei* was related to refined techniques and the materials based on the historical period. The aesthetic values emphasize “refinement,” indicating that the quality of good or bad is based on the level of perfection of the techniques and how

to make good use of materials. This quality was also the effect of the government's effort to improve the quality of exported products. *Kogei* did not and does not necessarily denote cultural value. Any object made by hand was considered as *kogei*. Therefore, it can be translated closely to the concept of general "craft" in English term.

## 2.2 *Mingei* 民芸

*Mingei* consists of the word, *minshuu* (people), and the word, *kogei* (craft), and means the people's craft. There were at least two reasons that pushed Yanagi to coin the concept of *mingei*:

1. The industrialization and mechanization in Japan, which caused a sharp loss of beauty in all the crafts.
2. The use of beautiful crafts (*kogei*) by merely the upper class of Japanese (and so they do not belong to all the people of Japan).

Yanagi defined the essential identity of *mingei* or *getemono* by creating classifications of crafts. The first was a kind of folk craft he called "guild crafts" (*minshuteki kogei* - *kyodanteki kogei*). These crafts are "unself-consciously handmade and unsigned for the people and by the people, cheaply and in quantity." They are also called *getemono* as the opposite of *jotemono*. While *getemono* means common household objects, *jotemono* means artistic and refined object with a higher nature, including individual/artist crafts and aristocratic crafts in Yanagi's classification.

A second kind of folk craft were "industrial crafts" (*minshuteki kogei* - *shihonteki kogei*). These crafts are represented by products such as aluminum saucepans, and so on, made under the industrial system by mechanical means.

A separate category was "artist crafts," such as "aristocratic crafts" (*bijutsuteki kogei* - *kizokuteki kogei*). These crafts include such crafts as Nabeshimaware in Japan

under the patronage of a feudal lord. The other kind of “artist crafts” consisted of “individual crafts” (*bijutsuteki kogei - kojinteki kogei*). These crafts are “made by a few, for a few, at a high price. [They are] consciously made and signed.”

In Yanagi’s *mingei* theory, the criterion of beauty (Kikuchi, 2004) was as follows:

1. Beauty of handcrafts: As long as man does not become enslaved to machines, he may use them freely. However, if the machine is master and man the slave, the effect is disastrous. Man is most free when his tools are proportionate to his needs. The wisest planning would be in the direction of using the power in the preparatory stages of work and the hand in the finishing stages. Handwork would be too wasteful for the one, and machine finish too destructive of quality for the other. This criterion does not reject the use of machine as a part of producing process but to emphasize the use of machine under the control human being.
2. Beauty of intimacy: The quality of intimacy is a natural requirement since the articles are to be lived with every day. The beauty of intimacy establishes a world of grace and feeling. The beauty of craft is not the beauty of “taste” or “style” is not so much of the noble, the huge, or the lofty as a beauty of the warm and familiar. For example, people hang their pictures high up on walls, but they place their objects for daily use close to them and take them in their hands. This criterion mainly emphasizes the utilization of the objects or items in everyday life.
3. Beauty of use/function: This particular kind of beauty in crafts is the beauty that identified with the use. Apart from the use, there is no beauty in crafts.

4. Beauty of health: This criterion is defined as the opposite of “disease.” Under this criterion, “disease” includes the bad handling of material, over complicated procedure of technique, over employment of decoration, slick skills, one-sidedness of personality, and over-self-consciousness. Refinement has been equated with beauty, but to think that technical skill is immediately connected with beauty is an impoverished way of evaluation.
5. Beauty of naturalness: This criterion stresses the power of nature. Nature is acknowledged as the outer power. Nature must be freely at work in the mind when anything is to be well made. Procedures must be natural. Nature’s simplicity hides a greater complexity than is evident among humans. The material provided by nature is nearly always best. One aspect of the beauty of crafts lies in the beauty of the materials. Crafts are born where the necessary raw materials are found. The closer we are to nature, the safer we are; the further away, the more dangerous.
6. Beauty of simplicity in form and design: No excessive color, no over-decoration, a simple form, and two or three patterns in a primitive method.
7. Beauty of tradition, both the tradition in process and design: This aspect emphasized submissive reliance of the craftsperson on tradition.
8. Beauty of irregularity: Irregular, asymmetrical, rough. It is similar to the tea master’s aesthetic idea of the grotesque.
9. Beauty of inexpensiveness and beauty of plurality: Mass produced, repetitive production. The works could be copied and repeatedly produced in large quantities, and are made without obsessive consciousness of beauty.
10. Beauty of sincerity and honest toil: By unknown craftspeople, not made for money or greed.

11. Beauty of selflessness and anonymity: Made by an egoless, unknown, unlearned, and poor craftsman.

The new values of beauty coined by Yanagi became the new aesthetic spirits in Japan afterwards. The *mingei* visual aesthetic was profoundly influenced by the values of the tea ceremony. They are remarkably similar, but behind appearances, they embodied different philosophies. The tea ceremony's "simplicity" and "roughness" were made by artists to be enjoyed by the higher social class of the Japanese, while *mingei* emphasizes the unostentatiousness of the objects as a reflection of the pure heart of an unknown craftsman for the ordinary people.

At the end of Second World War, there were many changes in the concept of *mingei*. Around that time, Yanagi grew deeply interested in Buddhism, which then influenced his theory of *mingei*. Also around this time, *mingei* was disseminated more widely in Europe and the USA, in accordance with Yanagi's activities in disseminating Buddhism. The *mingei* theory reached a climax around this time when Yanagi presented the *mingei* as an "Oriental" Buddhist aesthetics. *Mingei* theory gradually had difficulties in keeping its original values, such as the beauty of the unknown craftsman and the existence of the craftsman's "non-mindedness" because of the changes in the contemporary society.

Even though *mingei* emphasized the beauty of non-individuality of the craftsman, there were many talented individuals inspired by the *mingei* theory and flourished during the movement. On the other hand, the *shin mingei* (new *mingei*) movement was initiated to revive *mingei* by the unknown craftspeople and to revive a depressed rural industry. Even though this movement did not accord with the aesthetic criteria of *mingei*, Yanagi at that time did not respond negatively.

*Mingei* as a theory declined after the Second World War and then developed as a religion. Around this time, the image of *mingei* has gradually disappeared inside Japan. On the other hand, *mingei* started to be perceived as the ideal of Orientalism or Japanism in the Occident world. *Mingei* then flourished as one of the most influential ideals of art from Asia in the western world.

### **2.3 New Mingei 新民芸**

As mentioned in the previous sub-chapter, there were many talented craftspeople inspired by the *mingei* theory, such as Toyoshika, who initiated movements in several parts of Japan. This movement aimed at reviving the ideal of *mingei* and also creating new crafts with *mingei* ideals in order to revitalize a depressed rural industry, and was known as the initiation period of the new *mingei* (*shin mingei*) movement. Since then, *shin mingei* became the beginning of the *kurafuto*.

In 1934, the Japan Folk Crafts Association (*Nihon Mingei Kyokai*) was founded. This association became the core institution for the development of the New Mingei movement. New *mingei* were produced with new designs to suit the modern lifestyle and with a view towards the urban consumer market. The original *mingei* objects collected by Yanagi became the aesthetic philosophy of new *mingei*.

### **2.4 Dento kogeï 伝統工芸**

*Dento kogeï* was a term used to represent the exquisitely made craft objects intended for export and were accorded the highest status among modern crafts, embodying a sense of national importance. The government set up a system of awarding the title, Master Craftsmen of *bijutsu kogeï*, the highest honor in the craft world, for excellence in crafts. The first award system was made in 1890 and was followed by several similar systems afterwards. Every year since 1954, the Japanese

Traditional Crafts Exhibition has selected works in accordance with the commitment to “protect and foster crafts that have high historical or artistic value.” This commitment was encoded in the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties.

Traditional crafts industries in the region began a belated recovery in the latter half of the 1950’s. In 1955, the Japanese Ministry of Education introduced the title, *Jyuyo Mukei Bunkazai* or Important Intangible Cultural Property, which was commonly called *Ningen Kokuho* (National Living Treasure) and still exists up to present. In July 1975, based on the new legislation, The Association for the Promotion of Traditional Craft Industries was established by a nation-wide consensus from the traditional craft industry. This Association, under the guidance of national and regional authorities, has been active in the promotion of traditional crafts at a grass roots level while ensuring that these traditions are passed on to the next generation. The criteria for a craft object to be considered as a traditional craft (*dento kogeï*) were set as follows:

1. The article must be used mainly in everyday life.
2. The article must be primarily manufactured by hand.
3. The article must be manufactured using traditional techniques.
4. The materials should be mainly those which have been traditionally employed.
5. The industry must be of a regional nature.

With the criteria mentioned above, about 198 crafts in Japan were recognized as Japanese traditional crafts (*Nihon dento kogeï*). The *Nihon Dento Kogeï Ten*, or the Japanese Traditional Crafts Exhibition, is held every year; of the hundreds of works submitted, less than 30% are selected for exhibition.

### ***2.5 New kogeï***

On 1920's, the birth of the studio crafts movements marked the beginning of the "golden period" of the modern crafts movement. The emergence of a new group of artist craftspeople, the *mukei*, signaled the developing of *bijutsu kogei* into another direction, studio crafts. The *mukei* were against the tradition of attaching high value to technique as opposed to creativity. This group's ideal was to create objects from the imagination. In its development, the founder of this group, Takamura Toyochika, maintained that people should create beauty in ordinary daily objects in order to raise the standard of beauty in the society. Moreover, he stressed that the functional beauty matches with modern life. The term *kogei* and studio craft in recent contexts were also used to represent this type of craft (Kikuchi, 2004). From the descriptions above, it can be concluded that there are crucial characteristics that differentiate one type of crafts from the other types. The attributes are as follows:

1. The practical utility of the craft object. The aims of the crafts are to serve a particular practical purpose rather than merely an aesthetic function. However, in the contemporary world, the role of crafts has ranged from the very functional items to very ornamental ones.
2. The method that is used to make the craft object. A traditional way is the one that originally come from Japan, and the other techniques are more recent.
3. The quantity of the production. *Mingei* theory emphasized the importance of the crafts to be able to be produced in large quantities. Therefore, to copy or imitate, for a craftwork, is typical. However, in the present era where the idiosyncrasy has become crucial, to copy or imitate another person is not as simple as before.

4. The design of the crafts product. The design or forms of the traditional crafts ranged from the very conventional forms, such as ones that originated in ancient times, to very contemporary forms and designs.

It is important to note that traditional crafts have several types, each with its own peculiar characteristics. This is due to the fact that every craft object was made individually by the maker to serve a particular function. The attributes mentioned above distinguish crafts object as differing types. This classification serves to help understand the tangible values of the objects.

### **3. A Case Study of Yamanaka Lacquerware, Japan**

#### ***3.1 History***

The Yamanaka region is located in Ishikawa Prefecture. It is also well known as a hot springs resort. Yamanaka's history in lacquerware began with the introduction of the skill of wood-turning in the 16th century. It has flourished alongside the hot springs by selling utensils like bowls, trays, and a variety of other household items to visitors. The advanced wood-turning techniques are one of the unique features of Yamanaka lacquerware.

*Kijishi* (woodwork experts) came from the Korean Peninsula about 2000 years ago. There is also evidence of *kijishi* existence in Nara. After the appropriate trees to make the woodwork ran out, *kijishis* spread throughout Japan, including to Fukui.

Yamanaka *shikki* (lacquerware) originated in the Manago village, upstream the Daishoji River. During the Tensho era, 1573-1592 of the Azuchi-Momoyama Period, *kijishis* moved from Echizen (Fukui) to Manago village. Woodcarvers settled in this part of Ishikawa Prefecture and began selling un-lacquered utensils to visitors

of the Yamanaka spa and Ioji temple. The techniques of *sujibiki-ujibiki* were developed in this part of Ishikawa before the middle of the seventeenth century. During the Horeki era (1751-1764), lacquering techniques began to be introduced from other parts of Japan. During the Bunka era (1804-1818), a lacquer craftsman named Ikuzo, and a wood carver named Zenzo from Echizen Maruoka, were invited by Dekuraya Uemon. Ikuzo and Zenzo trained the locals to color wooden products with lacquer. This training was the foundation of Yamanaka lacquerware. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Yamanaka woodworking was well established as a center for lacquerware.

In the late nineteen-fifties, Yamanaka began incorporating synthetic bases and producing new types of lacquerware. These products were claimed to be easy to handle and could be inexpensively mass-produced in a wide variety of shapes and colors. A range of products was developed, including tableware for day-to-day and restaurant use, gift items, and interior goods, which pushed Yamanaka to become Japan's biggest production center for these products by the mid-eighties.

In 1975, a bill for the promotion of Traditional Craft Industries was enacted, designating Yamanaka lacquerware as a traditional craft. Many craftspeople engaged in wood-turning, coating, and painting were recognized as torchbearers of traditional crafts. Since then, they have been involved in educating their successors to carry on the traditions of lacquerware crafts.

In April 1997, the Yamanaka Lacquerware Industrial Technology Center, funded by Ishikawa Prefecture, opened in Tsukatani, Yamanaka-machi. The Center's mission is as follows:

- Recruiting trainees for the wheel wood-turners
- Maintaining the traditions

- Research and development
- Merchandising and polishing designs in cooperation with Ishikawa

Prefecture's Industrial Laboratory

In 1981, at the site next to the Centre, the prefectural government built Yamanaka Lacquerware's Traditional Industry Building. The building functioned as a place to demonstrate the manufacturing processes, to exhibit and sell the products, and as an office of the producer's association. With the completion of the Centre, the industry is now equipped with both technological and marketing ingenuity.

In a recent development, the industry is targeting, beyond the traditional use, a wider variety of markets, including younger consumers, who would appreciate wood grains on lunch boxes, pens, and stationery products. These products include the using of plastic materials which are mass produced by the injection molding process. The breakdown of production volume showed that 35 billion yen, or almost 75% of production, is plastic-based lacquerware, known as modern lacquerware. However, competition from cheap imported goods, glassware, and ceramics recently has continued to keep the market for plastic lacquerware tight. Other problems were the occurrence of a public protest against the improper disposal of chemical waste and allergies to chemical substances. Due to these problems, the Yamanaka lacquerware industry was forced to make improvements in its production strategy.

The improving efforts consisted of several steps:

- Applying brand marks to differentiate the level of traditional processing methods. When the lacquer is applied on wood or plastic surfaces, it is hard to distinguish the base materials, especially for ordinary consumers. The brand mark system helps consumers assess the products based on the genuine quality.

- Conducting an integrated business study of research and development in all aspects of lacquerware production. This study includes all of the involved parties, from wholesalers to wood, to lacquer producers, base-coat craftspeople, *maki-e* painters, finishing coat craftspeople, and the makers of packaging. They also built a network of wood and design research institutions within Ishikawa prefecture.
- Developing a brand-new type of lacquer. The Industrial Research Institute discovered a way to prevent lacquerware from degrading under high temperatures when using a laser to smooth the surface, which also resulted in a rainbow-like color with seven different colors of degradation.

By continuing to produce the best quality of woodworking and beautiful lacquer painting while adapting to the recent market needs and demand, Yamanaka lacquerware is still the largest producer of lacquerware to date.

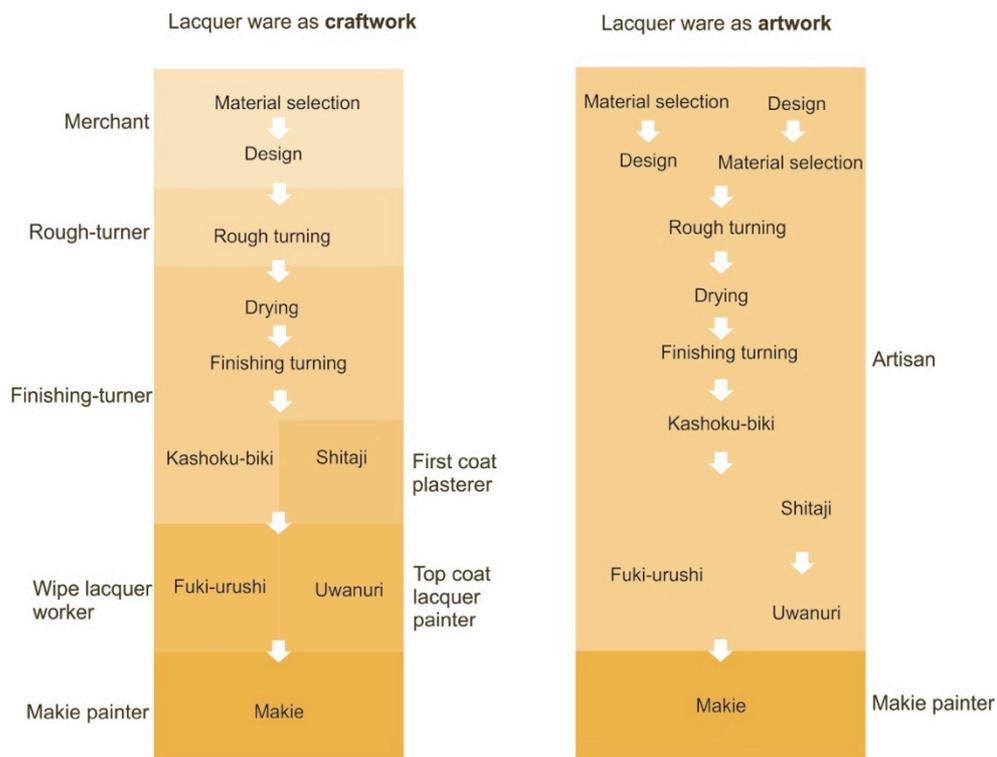
### ***3.2 Specialty of the Yamanaka Lacquerware***

Japanese lacquerware is known for its durability. Lacquerware that is found in Japan is commonly colored in red, black, and orange. According to a craftsman in Yamanaka, Mr. Kawakita, one of the specialties of the Yamanaka lacquerware is the wood-turning technique. There are several regions in Japan which produce wooden-based lacquerware—for example, Wajima, also located in Ishikawa Prefecture. However, Yamanaka is now the biggest producer of wooden-based lacquerware in Japan. The exquisite wood-turning techniques of Yamanaka, which feature the beauty of the natural wood grain pattern, is very rare, and is of a very high quality. In addition, Yamanaka lacquerware uses a different technique when applying lacquer. Wajima lacquerware, for example, uses a mineral powder called *jinoko* as its hardener, while Yamanaka lacquerware does not use *jinoko*.

### 3.3 Yamanaka craftspersons

The lacquerware production in Yamanaka can be distinguished into two categories, that is, craftwork and artwork. The diagram below shows the differences between producing lacquerware as craftwork and as artwork. As craftwork, lacquerware is produced industrially. Objects that are made in this category involve more than one type of craftsperson. Long ago, Yamanaka lacquerwares were made with a specific labor division or *bungyou*-分業.

On the other hand, as artwork, lacquerware is made as the very personal work of a craftsperson. For a craftsperson to produce the artwork, he or she will be responsible for the whole process of making it.



In Yamanaka, I met several craftspeople who were engaged in wood-turning activities. These craftspeople have been involved in wood-turning for various amounts of time.

Some have been working as a craftsperson for more than half their lives. I found that, even though there are a lot of craftspeople engaged in the activity of finishing wood-turning or *shiagebiki* -仕上げ引き, the focus is different from one to another.

The types of wood that usually used as lacquer ware base are as follows:

1. ケヤキ *keyaki* (zelkova)
2. トチ *tochi* (horse chestnut)
3. ミズメ *mizume* (Japanese cherry birch)
4. クリ *kuri* (chestnut)
5. ミズナラ *mizunara* (Mongolian oak)
6. カエデ *kaede* (maple tree)
7. ブナ *buna* (Japanese beech)
8. クルミ *kurumi* (walnut)
9. カシ *kashi* (oak)
10. クロガキ *kurogaki* (black persimmon)
11. ホウ *hou* (magnolia oborata)
12. マツ *matsu* (pine tree)
13. スギ *sugi* (Japanese cedar)
14. ヒノキ *hinoki* (Japanese cypress)
15. キリ *kiri* (paulownia)
16. イチヨウ *ichou* (maidenhair tree)
17. クノミ *kunomi*
18. ツタ *tsuta* (ivy)
19. エンジュ *enju* (Japanese pagoda tree)
20. セン *san*

21. キバダ *kibada* (amur cork tree)
22. カツラ *katsura* (Japanese judas tree)
23. エノキ *enoki* (huckberry)
24. ジンダイのケヤキ *jindai no keyaki* (Japanese zelkova)
25. 梅 *ume* (Japanese apricot)
26. クワ *kuwa* (mulberry)

Other than the local wood, they are also using the imported woods, such as:

1. Blackwood
2. Pink ivory
3. Purple wood
4. Lace wood
5. Cedar

The production process of making lacquerware is as follows:

1. Material preparation



2. Cutting process of log wood into smaller size





3. Wood turning, consists of rough turning and finishing turning



4. Applying the textile to strengthen the wooden base before applying the lacquer



5. Applying lacquer to the base. This step should be repeated 15-20 times to gain the best quality. The application of lacquer to the base consists of the application of *shitaji*, *fuki urushi*, and *uwanuri*.



6. Painting *makie*.



Below are the tools that used to make the wood base of the lacquerware.

No	Tool	Name
(1)		Woodturner
(2)		Gouge
(3)		Small gouge
(4)		Grinder stone
(5)		Hand supporter
(6)		Ruler
(7)		Cleaner

(8)		Others
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**Mr. A**

Mr. A works as an artist, concentrating only on producing the containers for incense that are usually used in the traditional tea ceremony. The designs are traditional. He developed his own designs, with similar characteristics from one to another. He used the special technique of Yamanaka lacquerware, such as *sujibiki*, *oyakobiki*, and the other fine, detailed techniques of Yamanaka wood-turning. He is responsible for every stage in producing his works, from material preparation to lacquer painting. He works in his own home, in a small room that functions as his workshop. Inside this room, he also stores his half-finished works and unprocessed materials. He creates works based on orders and other works. When inspiration comes, he makes a design, prepares the material, and then starts working. A container may take from one to several months to make, depending on the design.

The level of difficulty of his design depends on the details. The more detailed the design, the more difficult a piece to make, and the longer time it took to make. He has been working as an artist for more than seventy years, always working by himself. The usual design of his works is not typical of Yamanaka lacquerware. However, he is also able to make the typical designs, such as trays bowls, and so on. His skill at wood-turning is very sophisticated, and he focuses on making the incense containers. Mr. A makes his works as artworks.



(From left to right) Picture of Mr. A working on his workspace; the drawing plan;  
incense containers



Mrs A working as lacquer painter

**Mr. B**

The other craftsman is Mr. B. He was already retired by the time I visited him. He was working in a workshop owned by other person in the area. After he retired as a worker, he worked in his own home. His son is a wood-turning teacher in the training center. He showed me several kinds of works that he made, such as trays, bowls, cups, and so forth. Most of his works are finished in transparent lacquer so that the natural patterns of the wood are visible. He knows the *urushi* painting techniques very well, but he focuses on wood-turning. In the workshop where he used to work, he was a wood-turner craftsman or *shokunin*-職人. As a *shokunin*, he worked according to the orders from his employer. He did not make his own designs when he working as a *shokunin*. In other words, his job was to make lacquerware as craftworks.



Mr. B showing his works

### ***Mr. C and Mr. D***

The next craftspeople I met were Mr. C, a National Living Treasure of Yamanaka, and his son, Mr. D. Mr. D is a craftsman and also a wood-turning teacher in the training center. Mr. C and Mr. D lived close to their workshop. But Mr. D then renovated the workshop building and moved to the second floor of that building, where he lives with his family, separately from his father. The workshop was running as an industry with several employees, but they are not hiring any more employees now. There are two buildings run as workshop, one of which is living space on the renovated second floor, and the other is still run as workshop, with a gallery on the second floor. In previous eras, the area was known for a complex of the lacquerware industry.

Mr. C has been engaging in wood-turning for a very long time. He received his first recognition in 1962 (the 9<sup>th</sup> Japanese Traditional Crafts Exhibition), and again in 1966 and 1968. In 1994, he was granted the title, Important Intangible Cultural Heritage (重要無形文化財), in woodworking. As artists, Mr. C and Mr. D are responsible for each stage in the production process of their works. Mr. D's son has also started to learn wood-turning, especially after his graduation this year from the Product Design course at the Kanazawa College of Art. His first lacquerware work was his academic project for graduation, a wooden-based lacquerware lunchbox. His

idea was to create something new and “fresh” with Yamanaka lacquerware, using the “product design approach” instead of craft.

It is interesting to compare the works of the family members. Mr. C, as the most senior artist in the family, holds the philosophy of his work very highly. A work of craft should serve a practical utilitarian function and be beautiful at the same time. He depends on the beauty of the nature, historical objects, and the beauty of many kinds of objects that he saw for his design inspirations. Mr. C explored many details of traditional techniques applied in his works. The final designs, however, are very simple, yet exhibit his great skills.

Meanwhile, the way Mr. D tells stories about his works showed his pride in “getting out” from the very traditional or usual design of the Yamanaka lacquerwares. He explores a lot of different forms and material for his designs. For example, one of his works uses an unusual part of used wood. Compared with normal wood material, the material was very vulnerable because it had been bitten by bugs. He decided to expose this section of the wood, treating the material very carefully before coating it with lacquer, and then coating the inner part using gold and paint patterns.

### ***Mr. E and Mr. F***

The last craftspeople I will introduce are Mr. E and Mr. F. Mr. E runs his own workshop, which is as big as half of his house and located just beside his home. Mr. E started work as merely a craftspeople and used to make his works based on orders from merchants. At that time, his father and his uncle also worked as wood-turning craftspeople. When I visited him, he employed one permanent wood-turning craftspeople and one temporary *urushi* painting craftspeople. He also taught two apprentices, or *deshi*-弟子, who graduated from art university, and at that time, were enrolled as students in the training center for almost four months. He works together

with his second son, Mr. F, who had been doing wood-turning for ten years. He has his own gallery in one of the room inside his house in which he exhibits his own works. In the workshop, he works according to orders from merchants from inside and outside the prefecture. Later in his career, he made his own designs to be exhibited and to be sold. Every year, he exhibits his works twice or three times in Tokyo. The works of Mr. E are various in forms, but he claimed to always start his creations based on practical function. In the other words, Mr. E practices wood-turning and lacquerware both as an artwork and as a craftwork.

For a craft industry, the ability to produce a certain amount of products in a limited time and with consistent high quality is a requirement. The basic principle of Japanese craft industry is to produce products quickly, neatly, and at a low price. There is no excuse for missing a deadline or creating works insufficient in quality. At this point, we can see the difference between the Japanese craft industry and other countries' craft industries, especially those of developed countries. For most developed countries, the quality consistency of handmade products is quite troublesome. It is common to produce differing quality or sizes in making handmade mass products. The best quality may be achieved when producing works by order, and the quality control is more likely to be a little loose if the works were produced in a relatively short time.



The situation in the workshop

Quality in Japanese craftsmanship is a very fundamental requirement, and basically no craftsman is unaware of this. To keep the quality consistent, a craftsman should know exactly when is the best time to start, to take a break, and to stop. As important as the work itself, taking a break is very necessary. At this workshop, after the lunch time, the craftsman should also take a nap. There is also another break every 16.00-16.30. *Shokunin* works until 18.00 everyday, and the boss and his son work later. However, they stop working before 21.00, unless there is unusual occasion, such as the exhibition's deadline or special orders.



(From left to right) Picture of Mr. E in the storage room; Mr. F at his workspace

Mr. E always considers himself as craftsman or *shokunin* and never an artist, even though his works are mostly distinct from those of other lacquerware craftspeople. He not only created made-to-order products in certain quantities for buyers, but he also made his own works or designs, exhibiting them in his own gallery inside his house. He said that he has never submitted his works to national exhibitions of traditional crafts or traditional arts, such as *Bunten*, *Nitten*, and so on, because he just made his works as the sake of crafts or *kogei* itself.

According to Mr. E, real *kogei* was born from the Japanese culture. Japanese culture is rooted in the syncretism of Buddhism and Shinto. Shinto believes in the existence of gods, or *kamisama*, such as the gods of the sea, mountain, stones, forests, big trees, and so forth. To show gratitude to the gods for providing nature to humans,

the Japanese consider places or things as sacred places or sacred things. This was the act of paying respect to, and feeling grateful for, life. In order to sacralize the gods, people make offerings using beautiful handmade containers. In Buddhism, people make altars and other equipment for praying. And these kinds of objects are made wholeheartedly because people want to show that they are grateful and thankful for having been given life. The culture of making beautiful objects wholeheartedly has become a Japanese tradition. By making best quality objects, they have shown how grateful they are for nature and the gods.



Picture of the workshop from outside

Included in the representation of Buddhism and Shinto syncretism is the tea ceremony. Even though it originally came from China as medicine, the tea ceremony in Japan has developed its distinctive characteristics as one of the traditions unique to Japan. Sen No Rikkyu established the tea ceremony practiced until today. He is one of the most influential figures in the Japanese culture. At that time, civil wars occurred throughout Japan, and it was hard to tell whether someone was on one's side or the enemy's side. Sen no Rikkyu invited people to tea and served them with all of his hospitality in order to figure out in which side was his guest was on. Through this, he could also approach his guests if he felt like they could be allies. At that time, only

males attended the ceremony. The tea ceremony is now becoming the most common tradition in Japan, and it typically includes many handmade objects. Japanese crafts or *kogei* were developed in conjunction with the practice of the tea ceremony.

*Kogei* was also born from the basic human needs, such as food, shelter, and clothing. In ancient times, these needs could only be fulfilled through crafts. The best crafts were the ones that serve their function very well.

For Mr. E, the ultimate ideal in making crafts is the beauty of use or the 用の美 (*you no bi*). There would be no beautiful crafts without function. And the best crafts are the one that serve their function well and look beautiful. Craft is different from arts in the sense that arts do not have to serve a practical function for humans. For example, in a museum, the works of art are considered as beautiful by some people, but others might not understand them at all. This is due to the fact that contemporary arts often can only be appreciated based on rules pertaining to the works. For example, Mr. E felt that it was difficult for him to understand the beauty of the contemporary art.



Storage room

Mr. E has had several apprentices during his life. One of his apprentices graduated from art university with a major in lacquer. Her objective in learning wood-turning and lacquer was to be able to create artistic works. She explored her ideas of many kinds of forms and functions using the techniques. According to Mr. E, it was part of her learning process to gain maturity in her art. It is rather like a person's teenaged phase, always wanting to try everything. If he forced her to do otherwise, she would oppose him and stay away. Therefore, during that phase, an artist, should be left to explore everything. Even Mr. E himself had such a phase when he was young. There were times that he only made things he wanted, such as bowls or cups. But it was a process that made him finally understand the essence of even the very simple objects like bowls and cups.



A Wine glass made by Mr E



Mr E showing his half-finished lacquerwares

With the ideals of the “beauty of use,” Mr. E always starts his creations with function – for example, a cup for wine or a bowl for curry. He thinks about his objectives carefully and how he expects the objects to be used to serve the function. Then, he would imagine a form that can be used pleasantly and beautifully by the user. While common crafts emphasize the practical function, he takes care of both function and aesthetics. He also refers his works as *bijutsu kogeï* or art crafts.

For Mr. E as a craftsman, the classification or differentiation between *kogeï*, *bijutsu kogeï*, and other terms is unnecessary. For him, the classification or categorization of crafts is like a filing drawer. Academician put objects into certain

drawer and separate one from another based on particular reasons. For a craftsman, though, there will always be only one drawer to put all the objects that he has made.

#### **4. Types of Yamanaka Lacquerware Products**

Yamanaka lacquerware can be classified into at least four categories. In this paper, the categories are represented with types A, B, C, and D.

*Type A:* This kind of craft has ancient roots. The design and the production methods are very simple. Items are very functional and are usually everyday utensils.

Simplified designs and techniques are sometimes borrowed from traditional crafts.

They are often made by one workshop and are generally not influenced by crafts from



Simple lacquerware bowl for daily use included in type A

abroad. The making process uses machine for the rough work in early stages, for efficiency in time and quantity. The latter half of the process is by hand to ensure the fine quality. In the case of Yamanaka lacquerware, this type of craft is made in large quantities to fulfil the demand or order. The picture above shows a traditional form of miso soup bowl. This type of bowl is made of real wood in a very large quantity. Most of the common households, restaurants, and hotel in Japan still use this type of bowl.

*Type B:* This type of craft has existed for a very long time. The craft represents making of craft items mostly for everyday use, especially historically. Some are still being used today for special occasions. The designs are tried and tested, honed and refined, and there is a strong emphasis on techniques and skills used.

Although there is little development in designs, there may be adoption of new production methods and techniques if they give an advantage without losing the nature of craft as a whole. Some “traditional crafts” are retro-styled and made using traditional techniques to create variations of traditional designs. The sign of the maker mostly identifies the quality of the craft. This kind of articles is made in a very limited quantity or one-offs.

The Living National Treasures  
Ryozo Kawakita



Covered food box of mulberry wood

Lacquerware container made by the Living National Treasure, Ryoto Kawakita

The maker puts all his or her effort in making this type of craft. The making process is initiated from ideas, and then comes the material selection and the making process, or an idea appears after the maker meets inspirational materials. The picture above shows a work of Kawakita Ryouzou, a National Living Treasure in Yamanaka

lacquerware. (Picture source:

[http://shofu.pref.ishikawa.jp/shofu/yamanaka/yamanaka2000hp\\_e/kawakita\\_e/kr\\_02.htm](http://shofu.pref.ishikawa.jp/shofu/yamanaka/yamanaka2000hp_e/kawakita_e/kr_02.htm))

*Type C:* This type of craft is a recent one and represents the items to be admired and enjoyed even though they may be functional. Designs are often novel but may be borrowed from traditional craft forms and techniques that may have historical roots. Designs are often unique. Many pieces of studio craft have a traditional craft legacy and are mostly made by one person and may be influenced by craft designs and



New designs of the Yamanaka lacquer ware made by young craftsman

techniques from abroad. Compared to the traditional design of Yamanaka crafts, this type of crafts offers a new and refreshing design, sometimes very contemporary. The articles can be produced one-offs or in greater quantities. The articles also show the self-expression of the maker, for the maker signs most of the articles. (Picture source: [http://img2.blogs.yahoo.co.jp/ybi/1/11/a7/yamanaka\\_urushi/folder/317983/img\\_317983\\_3607212\\_0](http://img2.blogs.yahoo.co.jp/ybi/1/11/a7/yamanaka_urushi/folder/317983/img_317983_3607212_0))

*Type D:* In the case of Yamanaka lacquerware, this type of crafts consists of

成型された素地



重箱

盆

椀

弁当箱

Lacquer ware made of plastic produced in Yamanaka

products made of plastic. The lacquer can be both natural lacquer and chemical (but environmentally safe) lacquer. The forming process uses an injection moulding machine operated by craftspeople, while the finishing lacquer is done both using tools which are entirely different from the traditional ones, and fully produced by hand-painting (lacquerware) and hand-drawing (*maki e*). The articles developed with this process are very functional and made to expand the target market. Producing large quantities is the biggest concern in the producing process. The picture above shows some forms that are produced by the injection moulding process before the painting of lacquer (Picture source: [http://www.kaga-tv.com/yamanaka/process/gosei\\_01.html](http://www.kaga-tv.com/yamanaka/process/gosei_01.html)).

## Chapter Three: Case Studies from Indonesia

### 4. Overview

Traditional craft in Indonesia has a very interesting historical background. As an archipelago country, old Indonesia consisted of many kingdoms. These kingdoms became places where cultural and economic exchange took place with other continents. General culture in Indonesia consisted of two categories that flourished inside the palace, known as *budaya Agung* (“great culture”), and outside the palace, known as *budaya Alit* (“small culture”). From these cultures were born two types of traditional crafts: *kriya* (also written *kria*) and *kerajinan* (Krisnanto, 2009).

*Kriya* originated from inside the palace. Making *kriya* required not only hand skills, but also spiritual skills. Only a very few artists, called *empu* or *mpu*, were able to make this kind of craft. *Kriya* had a refined form, high quality, and was made in a limited amount. *Kriya* is also known as artworks, which contain aesthetic values, symbolic values, philosophical values, yet are still functional. In the contemporary context, the definition of *kriya* has shifted due to the change of the motivation in making object. *Kriya* in the past served the artistic or aesthetical needs of humanity. They also represented the culture of the time when the objects were made. For example, *keris* – the Javanese traditional asymmetrical dagger made of mixed iron, nickel, and steel, using a very complicated production process – was not made merely as a weapon. It was made of carefully selected material through a mystical process which represented the philosophical values of the culture at the period. A *kriya* from past eras was also said to be the “precious one” – *kriya adiluhung* – that reflected the uniqueness, beauty, and greatness of the culture. On the other hand, contemporary *kriya* is a result of the creation of a generation who cultivate the benefits of the past *kriya*. They are created as modified *kriya* of the past while also being based on very

personal ideas. Contemporary *kriya* are made to fulfil commercial or economic interests.

*Kriya* in the contemporary context can be divided at least into two types: expressional *kriya* and applied *kriya*. Expressional *kriya* is highly influenced by the western fine arts, which emphasizes the idiosyncrasy of the maker. Applied *kriya*, developing more widely in Indonesia, emphasizes the practical utility of the object. Applied *kriya* also becomes one of the stable economic commodities in recent Indonesia since it was able to survive in economic crises. Nowadays, this type of *kriya* is also called *kerajinan*.

*Kerajinan*, unlike *kriya*, developed outside the palace. *Kerajinan* belonged to the ordinary people and made by a mere craftspeople called *pandhe*. It was made to fulfil the need of the common people who lived outside the palace, had a low quality and showed less, sometimes no, aesthetic sense compared to *kriya*. Examples of common *kerajinan* in Java are hoes, cleavers, bamboo baskets, pottery, and so on. Since it served the daily needs of ordinary people, *kerajinan* in Indonesia could be found in many more places than *kriya*. Unfortunately, there are only very few sources that records the existence of these common *kerajinan* in the past and nowadays.

The term *kerajinan* is believed to have been introduced after the period of Dutch colonization in Indonesia because it does not appear in the repertoire of old Javanese language. This word appears because of the changes that happened during colonization, which include the significant shifting of the cultural values that made *kriya* the part of economic activity. These changes also caused the *kriya* to disappear from customs and beliefs. The Dutch established “art companies” that aimed to reproduce the valuable artworks in order to fulfil the demand resulting from the

period's trend of hunting cultural artifacts. These art companies were called *kunstnijverheid*. It is most likely that the term *kerajinan* was originated from it.

*Kerajinan* is derived from the word, *rajin* (an adjective), with the prefix *ke-* and suffix *-an*, which means "diligent." *Kunstnijverheid*, which means "applied art or craft", contained the word, *nijverheid*, "industry." The word, *nijver*, itself means "diligent." So it was possible that the Indonesian people translated the *nijverheid* as *kerajinan*. In that era, *kriya* and *kerajinan* were differentiated by the purpose for their creation. *Kerajinan* was related to the production and/or reproduction of artworks based on commercial or economic interests, while *kriya* was made with a particular purpose related to customs and beliefs.

During the post-colonial era until now, *kriya* has been developed into "art" and maintained its status as a cultural artifact, while *kerajinan* has been competing with industrialized mass products and facing a hard time, particularly after the free-trade era began. The industry of *kerajinan* is also designated as one of those developed under the supervision of the Ministry of Industry. As an industry, it is necessary for *kerajinan* products to be able to compete with those made using mass production techniques while maintaining a handmade process.

Due to this situation, the product designer in Indonesia plays a crucial role in maintaining the existence of the traditional craft industries, which should be maintained not only for the economic reasons, but also to preserve the cultural background of the objects. Industrial Design, as a field of study in Indonesia, was not established until 1960's. Unlike what happened in Japan, Indonesian design, until recently, has not completely developed to form its own design character.



Map of Indonesia

(Source: <https://www.google.co.jp/maps/@-53.0457924,20.4226348,2z>)

## 5. History of Sunda, West Java

The western part of Java Island has a culture distinct from the central and eastern parts of the island. The culture known as Sunda culture historically was spread in the western part, although speakers of the Sunda language also can be found in some part of central Java. According to the historical records, the term, *sunda*, which designated the area on the western part of Java and all of the human activities, was first written on an inscription from the 9th century. According to the inscription, around that period (AD 854), an area called Sunda already existed and was led by a leader called *prahajian* Sunda. It was not mentioned clearly as to when the Kingdom of Sunda was established. There are several other written texts mentioning Sunda as region or kingdom found in another part of Java. Another source is the records of a foreigner from Portugal, who stated that he witnessed at least two different cultures (Java and Sunda) on his brief journey along the coastal of Java islands. Other Portuguese people who visited the western Java also said that they witnessed the

Sunda kingdom, and that the capital was located on the inland part of Java and was called Dayo.

According to the sources from Majapahit period in Java, the kingdom that resided on the western part of Java island had always been called Sunda. Within the same sources, the event called *Pasunda Bubat* was also mentioned. Pasunda Bubat was a massive battle between the Sunda's king soldiers and the Majapahit troops. The battle occurred in Bubat, not far from the capital of Majapahit. The battle was caused by the rejection by the Sunda's king, Prabu Maharaja, of the proposal of Majapahit's king, Hayam Wuruk, to marry the Princess of Sunda. Prabu Maharaja rejected the proposal since he acknowledged the hidden purpose of the marriage proposal, such as to take control of the Sunda kingdom. Gajah Mada, as Majapahit's *patih* (similar to the position of Prime Minister in the modern era), was furious and decided to use violence to obtain his desire. This battle caused the death of Sunda's king, Prabu Maharaja, and his daughter, Princess Dyah Pitaloka, as well as their soldiers. This battle was considered to be excessively tragic, and the existence of Sunda kingdom was not even mentioned inside the script of *Negarakertagama* (a remarkable literature of old Indonesia) written by Mpu Prapanca. Many sources after the battle used the term, Pajajaran Kingdom, instead of Sunda to refer the kingdom on the western part of Java.

It is said that the battle had caused resentment from the Sundanese toward the people of Majapahit. The sentiment was caused by the view that the battle was unfair, matching the full power of Majapahit and just the Sunda troop that visited Bubat at that time. The Sundanese also were disappointed by the act of Gajah Mada, who at that time was trying to expand the power of Majapahit in Sunda in a dishonorable manner. The evidence of this sentiment still can be found in the western part of Java.

For example in West Java, unlike in other parts of Indonesia, there is no street named after Gajah Mada. Most Indonesians consider Gajah Mada as one of very important figures that contributed to the unification of Indonesia as a country. Due to the battle also, there was a rule of prohibition for a Sundanese to marry a person from outside Sunda, especially to marry Javanese, which was also understood to be a rule from the Majapahit era.

The region of West Java appeared after the Dutch colonization on 19th century. The Dutch assumed that Java island was run under one authority, but in fact historically Java was divided under two different authorities separated by the Cilosari river. The western part of Java consisted of four regencies: Banten, Batavia, Priangan, and Cirebon, while the eastern Java was named as eastern districts. In the other source, West Java was mentioned several times to indicate the western part of Java, while the source only mentioned “the center of Java” and “the east of Java” to refer to the other parts.

The historical facts above show that, even though both cultures of Sunda and Java exists in the same island, the two have different customs and culture. One of the most recognizable differences is the language. The chart below describes the differences between old Sundanese characters and old Javanese characters:



interpreted as principles to keep the harmony of the most important relation or connection of a person. *Silih asih* is interpreted as a representation of the relationship between humanity and God, or the owner of the Universe. *Silih asah* is interpreted as a representation of the relationship between humanity and nature. *Silih asuh* is interpreted as representation of the relationship between humanity and other human beings.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, one of the characteristics of pre-colonial culture was the existence of dualism: the great culture and small culture. The small culture in Sunda could be seen in the daily life of the community in the villages. There were several types of villages in Sunda. They were categorized based on the history of the village's forming process, geographic positions, environment conditions, and also the primary livelihood of the community. Based on the main livelihood of the community, there were three types of village (*desa*):

1. Farming villages – the main livelihood of the people was to cultivate the soil by farming. Most of the villages in West Java were farming villages.
2. Fishing village – the main livelihood of the people was to catch fish in the sea. The villages were located by or near the sea.
3. Handicraft village – the main livelihood of the people was to produce crafts, similar to home industries.

There were various products that produced in the handicraft villages – for example, tools made of metal, cotton, animal skin, wood, bark, and clay. Tools made of metals were divided into more specific categories, such as iron, copper, brass, gold, and silver. The makers of these metal works were called *panday* (also spelled *pandhe*) or *mapanday*. Cotton was processed to make a fabric and usually was processed to make batik. This process was done by the *pangeuyeuk* or the batik expert. There were

several more types of handcraft expertise in the home industries. For example, there was the *paliken* – the expert of painting; the *juru widang* – the expert of animal's skin crafts; the *kumbang gending* – the expert of making traditional music instruments; the *maranggi* – the expert of wood carving; and so on. Another kind of craft expertise included weaving (*anyam*) made of natural fiber plants.

Several areas in West Java are known as the handicraft villages area, including the areas of Tasikmalaya and Garut, which are known for weaving crafts made of bamboo (*pandanus*) and so on. Even though the skill of weaving can be found in many parts of Indonesia, the Sundanese have a unique relationship with bamboo.

## ***2.2 The Sundanese and Bamboo Culture***

It is said that the Sundanese have a distinct relationship with bamboo plants throughout their lives. It is said that the remains from the existence of Pajajaran kingdom (previously Sunda kingdom) were hardly found because most of the constructions or building during the period were made of bamboo. There is no stronger evidence than merely the form of traditional houses and constructions made of bamboo spread in West Java. It is also said that, in the past, the life of a Sundanese person would never be separated from bamboo, from cradle to grave, from birth until death. When a baby was born, people used a *sembilu*, or knife made from bamboo, to cut the umbilical cord. Furthermore, the baby would be put on an *ayakan*, a pedestal made of bamboo. When the child grew started to walk, the parents would make *tonggak*, sticks that could support the baby walking safely. There were also many types of toys made of bamboo for the children. The Sundanese also used bamboo leaves to cover food and ate the bamboo shoots called *rebung*.



Sundanese traditional houses made of bamboo

They lived in houses made of bamboo. Not only the walls, but also the floor (*palupuh*) and the furniture were made of bamboo. There was a belief in previous eras not to build a house from materials that derived from soil, such as bricks, because they believed that to live inside house made from soil is the same as burying themselves. Inside the bamboo houses, every day they use utensils mainly made from bamboo. Bamboo was also made into traditional musical instruments, such as *angklung*, *calung*, flute, *karinding*, and so on. Finally, when a person was dead, he or she would be covered in woven bamboo and carried on a stretcher made of bamboo to the burial.



Daily utensils made of half-rough woven bamboo



Traditional musical instruments made of bamboo

### ***2.3 Bamboo Weaving Craft in West Java***

There is no clear evidence as to the time bamboo weaving was first made in West Java. Most possibly, this activity began after the people started to farming and settled in one place. Previously, the Sundanese farmed a field (*ladang* or *huma*), and moved to open new field every three years. Apparently, after they began to grow crops and settled down, the women had plenty of time to weave. There were at least two types of bamboo weaving at that time: rough weaving and half rough weaving. The wall of the traditional house is an example of rough woven bamboo, and daily utensils are examples of half rough woven bamboo. Bamboo weaving in West Java developed sporadically. The activity of bamboo weaving grew in several places that had abundant bamboo plants.

During the colonization period, 1830-1870s, the Dutch implemented the *cultuurstelsel*.<sup>1</sup> They forced natives to grow profitable crops in many areas in Indonesia and to hand the entire crop over to the Dutch government. The people suffered from famine because, in reality, the crops were taken without fair payment. During this period, activities other than farming could hardly be done by the people, including craftsmanship.

In 1900, the Dutch government announced the Ethical Policy. The Dutch Ethical Policy meant the acceptance of ethical responsibility for the welfare of their

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<sup>1</sup> *Cultuurstelsel*: cultivation system

colonial subjects. There were three main points of the ethical policy, known as the *Trias Van Deventer*: irrigation, migration, and education. The policy in education included the construction of school designated for the native Indonesian in many regions in Indonesia. Besides the construction of the schools, the Dutch government also provided training in several skills of craftsmanship. In Tasikmalaya and Garut, the Dutch taught women and children the skill of weaving. Even though weaving had been common long before the Dutch came, during the colonization period most of these native skills had been abandoned. A few people who still had the skill were appointed to teach their community's people.

Parakanhonje, a hamlet of the Sukamaju village in Tasikmalaya, was said to be the origin of fine weaving. During the Ethical Policy period, a craftsman from Sukamaju, Martadinata, was appointed to teach weaving to the community around Tasikmalaya, and then sent to other regions in Indonesia to teach weaving. After his return to his home in Parakanhonje, he actively taught weaving the community members. The skill of fine weaving, then, spread among the people of Tasikmalaya.

According to the report of Tasikmalaya handicraft for 1929/1930, there was a carpentry school known as *Ambachtschool*, which had a woodworking major and weaving major. At that time, handcrafting was also taught to the students in elementary schools. Following the independence of Indonesia, bamboo crafts continued to be produced, mainly as household industries.

There are at least three types of craftsman found in Indonesia:

1. artist-craftsman (Becker, 1978)
2. craftsman-trader
3. pure craftsman (Shiner, 2012)

The number of each type of craftspeople differs from low to high from the first type to the third type. Other than craftspeople, there are also merchants or producers whose job is to communicate orders from a buyer to the craftspeople-traders, who then distribute the order to the pure craftspeople.

The *craftsperson-trader* has a similar task with merchants/producers. They collect orders and distribute them to craftspeople in the area. The craftsperson-trader previously worked as a pure craftsperson or artist-craftsperson, unlike merchant/producer, who does not possess hand skills for producing crafts.

Many craftspeople are engaged in crafts producing merely to fulfil their economic needs, especially the *pure craftsperson* type. This type of craftsperson does not consider any other aspect of making craft other than the demanded quantity. The craftspeople-traders/merchants/producers supervise the quality of crafts. The varying degree of quality determines the fee for the pure craftsperson's work.

The *artist-craftsperson* type can be found in all crafts-producing areas, but limited to a few people. This type of craftsperson is engaged with and enjoys the whole process of making craft and is willing to spend the time to explore new ideas and techniques. They also receive order from the buyer for limited quantities, because they tend to maintain a high quality of the objects they make. In the following section, I will show the examples of artist-craftsperson type.

## **6. A Case Study on Tasikmalaya Bamboo Weaving Crafts, Indonesia**

### ***3.1 Overview***

Bamboo weaving in Indonesia general consists of three types, rough weaving, half-rough weaving, and fine weaving. The oldest type of weaving is the rough weaving. Traditional houses in West Java are made of bamboo and the walls were

made of rough woven bamboo. Meanwhile, the daily utensils made of bamboo are usually using the half-rough weaving. The techniques of both types are not really different; they are differentiated by the size and part of bamboo that being used. In Tasikmalaya, there are several crafts centers area focused on each type of weaving.

There are many types of bamboo that can be found in Indonesia. There are at least five types of bamboos that usually used for bamboo craft in West Java, especially for weaving, such as *bambu hitam*, *bambu tali*, *bambu betung*, *bambu tutul*, and *bambu gading*.



*Bambu hitam* or *Gigantochloa verticillata*



*Bambu tali*, also known as *bambu apus* or *Gigantochloa apus*



*Bambu betung or Dendrocalamus asper*



*Bambu tutul or Bambusa maculata*



*Bambu gading or Bambusa vulgaris*

The process of traditional bamboo weaving is as follows:



Preparation of the bamboo material



Cut and divide the bamboo into required sizes



Dry the bamboo



Weave the bamboo

Traditional bamboo weaving depends on the hand skill of the craftsman. Therefore, the tools used in the process are very simple and functioned mostly to cut the bamboo.

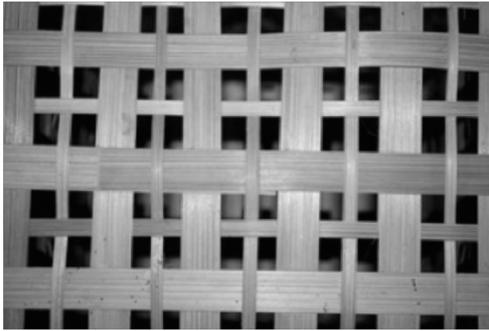


Small knives for cut and slicing bamboo

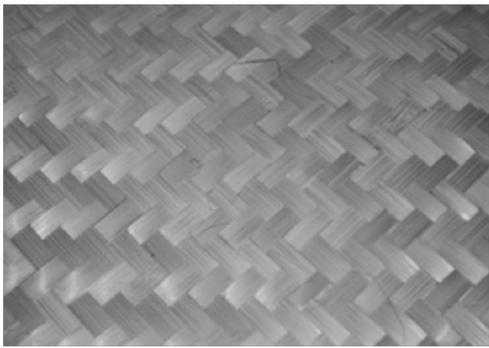


Knife for dividing the bamboo roll

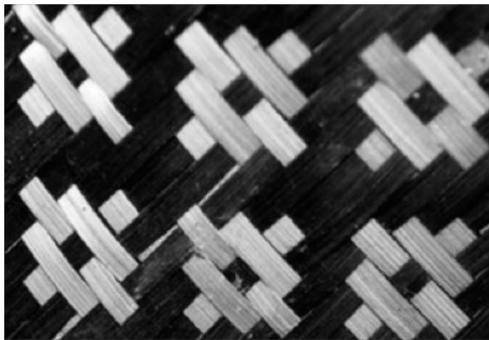
The types of weaving in Tasikmalaya consists of several basic patterns (Wibawa, 2010), as follows:



*Sasag/ Seseg pattern*



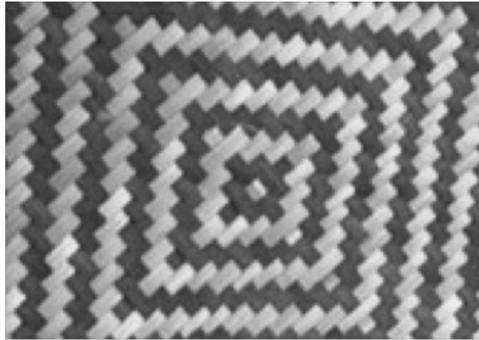
*Sasag ganda pattern*



*Mata walik pattern*



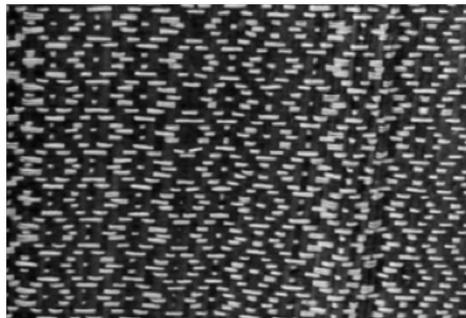
*Kepang pattern*



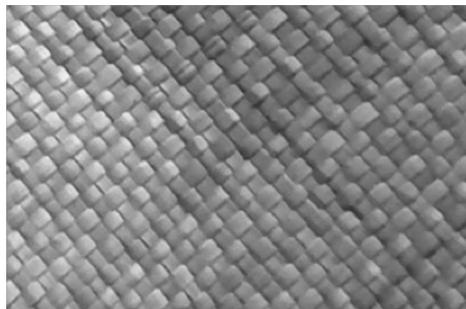
*Tangkup* pattern



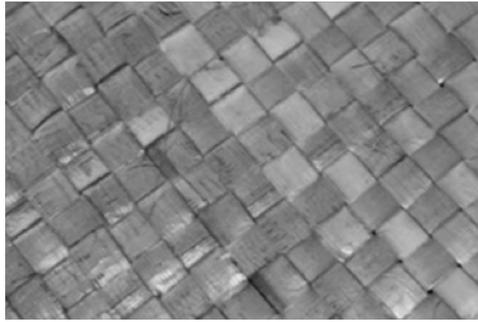
*Mata itik* pattern



*Bilik* pattern



*Lancar lurik* pattern



*Lancar serang* pattern

## 6.2 *Bamboo Craftspeople*

**Mr. Mumus.** Mr. Mumus (53 years old) lives in Situ Beet hamlet, Tasikmalaya. He resides with his wife and his youngest son. Mr. Mumus has five children and, among them, only the oldest son, Yana, is now doing bamboo weaving. Yana lives in a village not too far from Situ Beet, called Indihiang. Even though Mr. Mumus is an expert in *anyam lilit*, his son is not interested in pursuing the same technique. Everyday Mr. and Mrs. Mumus weave bamboo, starting early in the morning after finishing household chores. He also usually works in his field to farm crops for a while. He admitted that sometimes he goes into the field just to refresh his mind when he got bored with weaving.



Picture of Mr. Mumus

Mr. Mumus works based on orders. For the past two years, he has spent his working time making only one kind of craft. He made the design by himself using the very special technique of Situ Beet, called *anyam lilit*. This technique requires thoroughness and persistence since it uses very small slices *pakan* – of bamboo. This technique takes more time to finish compared to the usual process of bamboo weaving. With this design, he and his wife can finish around 90 pieces in a month. He mentioned that there is more demand for the same design from the present buyer than he is able to fulfil. The classic working system was to share the work by a division of labor within the hamlet. He has tried to solicit the craftspeople in the neighborhood to participate in such a division of labor, but he failed. He attempted to persuade the other craftspeople to make his design instead of the usual rough woven crafts that they were doing, because his design could yield more profit per working hour. He thought that it was quite a good offer, reasoning that everyone would love greater profits. Unfortunately the technique was too hard for other craftspeople. He was only able to convince his nearest neighbor to share the work by breaking down the parts of the design, because it consists of two different types of weaving, the bottom and the top. While his neighbor finishes the bottom part, Mr. and Mrs. Mumus finish the top part. After both parts are finished, they assemble all parts, including the smallest parts and several other parts, before finally doing the finishing.



(From left to right) Picture of one of Mr. Mumus' creations -- Example of common *anyam lilit*

Mr. Mumus feels happy with his designs. He is happy that his buyer still orders the same design after more than two years. He makes small improvements, such as in details and colors. According to his experience, usually other craftspeople would gladly make the same craft if a product sells well. But apparently other craftspeople have not been too interested in making the same type of product. He said that he never attempted to hide his knowledge from his neighbors. He thought that maybe if his neighbors were willing to switch to this product, then they would be able to earn more income. Once, some craftspeople wanted to make the same product, and Mr. Mumus taught them the technique. But as soon as they found how hard it was, they stopped learning and returned to make the usual crafts. Mr. Mumus said that he always could teach someone the techniques he knew, but it depends on the person's motivation.

Mr. Mumus, like the other craftspeople of Situ Beet, produces crafts to make a living. This is the reason why he has almost no time to develop his skill or new techniques. He said he might be able to improve his skill if he had more free time. He also said that he has several ideas of new design using the combination of weaving. Unfortunately, he can only concentrate finishing the orders that he has.

According to Mr. Mumus, bamboo-weaving craft in Situ Beet started around 1950. Mr. Samri, his wife's uncle, was a pioneer of bamboo craft in Situ Beet. He went to the Ambacht School of Crafts, which was established by the Dutch after the ethical policies were adopted. After he returned to Situ Beet, he taught his family members to weave. Slowly, weaving activity spread throughout the community as one of its main activities. In the 1960's, bamboo weaving in Situ Beet became more developed. In the 1970's, Batikra (*Badan Industri Kerajinan Rakyat*) was established

with the support of the government, and Situ Beet officially became one of the craft's centers (local people refer to it as *sentra*) in Tasikmalaya.

Mr. Mumus started to learn weaving in 1972 when he was 12 years old. He never had a proper education in weaving but learned from the people around him. He said that his "teachers are the environment." He was born in Jakarta, and his parents still live there. He said that in the first years he learned bamboo weaving, he did the tasks he was asked to do by other craftspeople. But as he grew up, got married, and had a family, he realized that there were needs to be fulfilled. He has since chosen to work as an independent craftspeople. Because he lives in a crafts center, he is willing to preserve the crafts.

The characteristics of weaving in Situ Beet are different from other areas in Tasikmalaya. Weaving in Situ Beet is coiled weaving (*anyam lilit*), a type of weaving that has almost disappeared in West Java. He admitted that during his lifetime and his activity as weaving trainer in many places in Indonesia, he has never seen the same type of weaving if not rattan. Other types of weaving are very general and could easily be found in many regions in Indonesia, such as *anyam silang* and *anyam kepang*. The *Anyam aray* technique is monotonous, and variations can be obtained from color patterns. If the color is used evenly, the results will show a rainbow pattern (*pelangi*) or *kuwung-kuwung* in Sundanese. If the color is applied in a different way, the pattern will look like a wave or *gelombang*. Unfortunately these techniques are from a very long time ago. Today, craftspeople in this hamlet are no longer making those kinds of weavings. The coloring is natural or synthetic. Since natural coloring is limited, most craftspeople use synthetic colors. Unlike other areas, the original products of bamboo weaving Situ Beet were not usual daily utensils, such as *tampah* or *bakul*, but mostly decorative works.

In *anyam lilit*, the size of the *pakan* and *lungsi* are different. *Pakan* are usually thicker and stronger than *lungsi*, because *pakan* is used to hold the whole structure. Meanwhile in *anyam kepang*, the size of *pakan* and *lungsi* are not very different. The sizes of *iratans*, for example in *boboko*, are the same. As the result of the technique, the form of crafts made of *anyam lilit* is mostly rounded.

Starting in 1970's, the designs were developed into various forms of flower vases. The making of new designs is both based on the demand of the buyer and by the creativity of the craftspeople. Crafts made by the creativity of the craftspeople are usually sold to other city, such as Jakarta, Cirebon, Yogyakarta, and sometimes outside Java, through the distributors.

The population of craftspeople in Situ Beet has been decreasing. There are generally two job types of craftspeople: full time craftspeople and part time craftspeople. In the 1990's, around 60% of the population in Situ Beet were working as craftspeople. In 2013, only around 20% of the population works as craftspeople. The type of working of craftspeople usually depends on the ownership of land. Someone who owns a significant amount of land usually works as a farmer. Someone who owns less land usually has main job as farmer and side job as craftspeople, while someone who does not own land works as a full time craftspeople. Nowadays, more men who do not own land tend to work in factories outside the village, so that the craftspeople in this village are mostly women and sometimes younger family members.

All materials were easily obtained in this village until recently, when there have been difficulties getting them. Mr. Mumus was reluctant to say much about this problem. He mentioned in a quieter voice that the problem was caused by the monopoly of land held by some businessman. He did not explain whether the

businessman was local person or not. However, the land now owned by the businessman no longer provides the materials for craftspeople. Before this, local people utilized bamboo for crafts material wisely. They took only properly aged bamboo and cut the bamboo just above the land so that the bamboo grew back in a few months. In addition to the monopoly, there are also other problems, such as the change of planting patterns around the watershed of Citarum.

To make weaving with the *anyam lilit* technique, the craftsperson needs fresh bamboo. Compared to the kind of bamboo needed to make half rough weaving, this kind of bamboo is harder to get. Fresh bamboo lasts for only one week after it is cut from the base. Meanwhile, to make rough or half rough weaving, it is best to use half-dry bamboo. Since obtaining fresh bamboo from surrounding area has become difficult, sometimes the craftsperson in Situ Beet has to switch to other types of crafts that use rough or half-rough weaving techniques. From one big stem of bamboo, Mr. Mumus usually can make 40 pieces of craft. The bamboo should be cut into small *iratans* within one week to obtain the best quality. The fresh bamboo has a flexible characteristic, and that is why it is easier to be used in rounded form *anyam lilit*. To obtain the best quality, the bamboo should be woven while it still humid and dried afterwards.

As for the crafts he made, Mr. Mumus stated that he rarely use the products he made at home. The family does not use any of Mr. Mumus' handmade crafts, even for the daily utensils he is able to make. Mr. Mumus and his wife only laughed when he was asked why they never use their products. He said that there is saying, *pande tara boga bedog*, which literally means "a blacksmith would not own any single sword." This is a popular satirical proverb in Sunda about a craftsperson that always makes something for everyone but never for himself. There are times when he kept

one or two pieces of his work at home, but when a guest comes and wants to have or buy the work, then he would just release it. He does not have any particular reason not to making utensils for his own household. “Just like that,” he said.



Mr. Mumus' house

Craftspeople in Situ Beet are independent. In other words, they mostly work by themselves to obtain materials, fashioning crafts, and selling them. There was an association of craftspeople in Situ Beet founded in the 1990's named *Kelompok Swadaya Pengrajin* (KSP). There were about 90 craftspeople, and it aimed to facilitate the craftspeople in Situ Beet to the crafts industry, such as materials supplying, production, and marketing. Unfortunately, it failed because the organizers were not professional, and it was difficult to manage the craftspeople professionally. There have not been any associations to manage the craftspeople in Situ Beet since then. The government has been giving support to the Situ Beet, as one of the *sentra*, through the Ministry of Labor and Ministry of Industry. The latest support came from the Ministry of Industry through the One Village One Product (OVOP) policy.

**Mr Toto.** Mr Toto (51) lives in Buniasih hamlet, Tasikmalaya. He was born and grew up in Paniis hamlet, only few kilometers away from the place where he lives. There are several hamlets around the area where the main occupation of the community is making bamboo crafts. Mr. Toto lives with his wife and their youngest

child who is in Elementary school. Mr. Toto has four children and two grandchildren who are now living separately. His oldest son, Eki (28), is now living in Cimahi and working as a bamboo craftsman in a design workshop. Mr. Toto moved to Buniasih hamlet after he got married. In this hamlet, unlike in Paniis, there are only few household engaging in bamboo weaving.



Picture of Mr. Toto

According to Mr. Toto, bamboo weaving in Paniis hamlet, where he was originally from, has been known for a very long time. He could not mention accurately the precise time, but as far back as he knows, his ancestors were all able to weave bamboo, like the people who lived there today. The specialty of Paniis weaving is to make daily utensils such as eating utensils, baskets, and so forth. The ability to make these kinds of crafts is learnt naturally. In previous eras, a family would sit together inside the house or in front of their house and weave. The male adults were usually farmers who would work most of the daytime during the planting and harvesting seasons. Otherwise, they would be at home and weave bamboo with the other family members. The products of their weaving were sold, some by family members, and the others by middlemen. There were several way of selling, some of which are still practiced by the villagers:

1. Indirect Barter: the products were exchanged with other commodity, such as vegetables.
2. Direct selling: to the neighborhood, nearest villages, or within the city.
3. Indirect selling: through middlemen to nearest villages, within the same city, outside the city, sometimes outside Java.



Craftspeople in Paniis hamlet.

The ability of weaving was never systematically taught by the elders to the youths. Weaving was already part of their daily life, so that at a very young age, children were attracted to bamboo weaving. The elders usually did not prohibit their children from doing what they did. Since a very young age, the children were allowed to hold the knife to slice the bamboo. The parents did not fear that their children would get hurt because they were watching carefully, and because they were happy that the children were involved in the activity. It was by watching the elders weaving that the children were able to learn the craft.

According to Mr. Toto, bamboo weaving in Paniis has a long history, but crafts have been revitalized since the 1980's, when the government sponsored short-term training for the craftspeople, and several trainers came from Bandung. Among them was an artist, Mrs. Rini, who was very enthusiastic to work with the craftspeople even after the training was over. Mrs. Rini motivated the craftspeople in Paniis by asking them to make products based on her designs. She was able to communicate her ideas to the craftspeople and inspired them to explore their skills in realizing the

desired designs. In later years, Mrs. Rini went back and forth from Bandung to Paniis to work with the craftspeople. Since then, the bamboo weaving activity was revitalized in Paniis, and the products were no longer the very traditional ones. Many contemporary designs were born by the hands of the Paniis craftspeople.

Apparently, Mrs. Rini's interest was not only revitalizing the area. She selected a few craftspeople to be trained and work in her workshop in Bandung. Mr. Toto was one of those selected. He moved to Bandung and stayed for few months to work in the workshop. Every day, he said, Mrs. Rini asked them to make different kinds of weaving. There were a lot of weaving types that they already knew, but some were new for them. Apparently, the abilities of the craftspeople varied. However, most of the time was spent by Mrs. Rini to motivate them to keep trying. In the next few months, several craftspeople went back to their hometown, perhaps because they could not bear the pressure any longer. Even though they were treated very well with accommodation, food, and salary, some of them felt that they were working under pressure.

Mr. Toto, at that time, did not feel that way. Each day, Mrs. Rini urged him to try out new techniques. He felt challenged and enjoyed what he did. He admitted that, during his training in Bandung, he found himself much more interested in bamboo weaving than before. Later, Mr. Toto became one of the trainers like Mrs. Rini and other government team members.

When Mr. Toto's children were much younger, the whole family worked together when they received an order. They were living in a small house made of bamboo. Like other households, in the daytime, they usually opened all the doors and windows so that the air could circulate. On days with good weather, they worked outside the house in the terrace; while on rainy days, they all worked inside the house.

Mr. Toto said that he never forces their children to do weaving, but each of them knows how to weave. He could, however, recognize whether the child was talented or not. His oldest son, Eki, was eager to learn weaving and is now working as craftsman. His second child, Sani, knew how to make very simple weaving only. She tried to use the more advanced techniques, but usually failed. She was not interested in learning weaving. The third child, Arianti, according to Mr. Toto, was very talented. Since she was little, she was able to imitate many kinds of weaving. Mr. and Mrs. Toto rarely taught her, but through watching her parents, she could make the same products they made.

Recognizing this talent, Mrs. Rini offered her the opportunity to move to Bandung. She was promised to be trained and to be paid for working on Mrs. Rini's art works. Since she was of school age, Mrs. Rini suggested she go to school in Bandung, which was a better quality school than the schools around the village. However, Arianti refused. Even though she was talented, her interest was not in weaving. His youngest son, Teten, is now in the fourth grade of elementary school. He plays around with bamboo, but not yet shown any interest in it.



Mr. Toto's house, surrounded by a rice field and pond.

Mr. Toto felt grateful for his experience to be acquainted Mrs. Rini since 1992. He had been, like other craftsman, only able to make half rough woven daily

utensils. But after he experienced as trainer and met many people, slowly he became known as craftspeople with advanced technique.

In Buniasih, as well as in Paniis, there are still many craftspeople who only make rough weaving. They make disposable products. The quality is low, and the products are intended to be use one time. The products are sold in the markets or sent to other regions in Java, sometimes outside Java. Inside Java, they are usually sold to Cikini and Jakarta. The sellers also sell the crafts in small amounts within the local area. The price is very low compared to the more contemporary crafts. Payment is usually done after the products are sold, either directly to craftspeople or through the collector (middlemen). Mr. Toto is concern about the quality of these products. However, the income of the people is mostly from this type of product. Apparently, this commodity still sells well in cheap markets, regardless of the quality. Mr. Toto, in this sense, has very strong principle to make good quality products. He always thinks how to make his works long lasting.

Other craftspeople only work for middlemen. These middlemen originally were craftspeople and later focused more on business than making crafts. There have always been middlemen in every crafts center. In previous eras, the middlemen might only collect and sell the crafts. But now, not only they collect and sell, but they also manage the production systems, supervising, and determining the production fee of the craftspeople. They also have to go outside the area to find buyers, bargaining, deciding the production system, and distributing the work to craftspeople. Sometimes they are responsible for the assembling and finishing process.

Mr. Toto, as craftspeople, is very proud of his works. He never mentioned the good points of his works, but even in the most simple and common weaving forms, we can see the quality of his handmade products. He wants the crafts he makes to be

useful, to have a good quality, to be used for a long time, and, even when it is not in use, to look beautiful. These principles are the ones that he always emphasizes to his son and his wife. Therefore, they always work towards those goals.

He once received order from the international interior goods company, Ikea, to make a bamboo woven box, which is called a *bese* in Indonesia. The design was very simple, plain boxes with definite size of 5 cm x 5 cm x 5 cm. The buyer ordered 10,000 pieces for every month. It seemed to be an easy task, but the first month trial went badly. Mr. Toto distributed the work to the surrounding craftspeople in his village. He assumed that everyone would be able to fulfill the objectives easily. However, when the day the buyers came to check the order, they were very disappointed because the size of each box was not standardized. Often, they were 1-2 cm over or under from the required size. No matter how Mr. Toto tried to make other craftspeople to be more precise, it always failed. He even tried to convince the buyers to loosen tolerance limits for the size, but they refused. In the end, he apologetically cancelled the order.

Mr. Toto, with the help of his wife, is now focusing to fulfilling an order from a restaurant in Bandung, and several orders of special designs from artists or designers outside Tasikmalaya. He mentioned that the orders from the restaurant are still promising since they continually need to use the utensils made of bamboo. Not only dining utensils, but also some interior products are needed and are routinely added or changed, such as lampshades, decorations, and so forth. Recently, the demand of traditional crafts for interior products is increasing, especially for hotels and restaurants. Even though the use of crafts in modern households is not significant, Mr. Toto believes that there would be opportunity for the traditional crafts to survive the competition with other industrial products.

The surrounding bamboo sellers fulfil the supply of bamboo for Mr. Toto's crafts. The sellers obtain bamboo from the surrounding area, such as Mount Galunggung. Even though there are a lot of bamboo sellers around the village, not all bamboo can be used to make good crafts. The best bamboo for weaving is called *bambu tali (Gigantochloa apus)*, and the best age to cut the bamboo is at the eighth months. To make the frame parts, the best time to cut is when the bamboo is one year old, because the frame must be harder and stronger than the weaving parts. Because the bamboo sellers sell bamboo of various ages, a craftsperson must choose carefully when buying the bamboo.

Like Mr. Mumus's family, Mr. Toto's family rarely uses their handmade products. Even if they keep some of their work at home, whenever a guest asks for them, they likely have to release the work. Sometimes they even have to sell the ones that they have already used because the customer does not mind buying used crafts. They release their crafts easily because they are able to make the same thing whenever they desire. Recently, Mr. Toto has tended to produce the products of more contemporary designs, but sometimes he still makes basic kitchen and daily utensils to be used at their home, for example the hood for food, *bakul*, and *boboko*.

## Chapter Four: Discussion

Based on the findings of fieldwork done in Yamanaka and West Java, there are several important points that will be discussed in this chapter. Japanese traditional crafts, in this study, are represented by the Yamanaka lacquerware, and traditional crafts from Indonesia are represented by Sundanese bamboo weaving. Both have unique characteristics which will be presented and discussed in this chapter. I will present these characteristics of both countries based on different perspectives, which demonstrates each country's values regarding traditional crafts. The discussion is expected to enrich the knowledge of the value of traditional crafts.

### 1. Japanese Traditional Crafts

As mentioned in the previous chapters, Japanese crafts in the contemporary context have several names, such as *kogei*, *mingei*, *kurafuto*. Besides that there are several different names derived from the same terms, such as *dento-kogei*, *shin-mingei*, *shin-kogei*, and so on. According to observations and field interviews (as was shown in the chapter two), traditional crafts in Japan in the contemporary context can be divided at least into four categories, types A to D.

Lacquer ware that belongs to the A type has several features. They are as follows: created based on order and produced in a large quantity, using machine at the half first of production, and handmade in the finishing stage. This type of craft encourages economic improvement. Even though the mass production of handmade crafts would not be able to compete with similar machine-produced objects, this type will be the primary support for the craftspeople's economy. This can be realized as long as the craftspeople can provide the best handmade quality within the provided time.

On the other hand, the continuity in producing type B lacquerware will keep society paying respect to a high-quality craft objects. Ordinary people mostly appreciate the objects in exhibitions and not through the experience of using the crafts. This type of craft could also be promising income for the high-skilled craftspeople whose name is identified with good work. As for the means of preservation of traditional crafts, this type becomes a motivation for young craftspeople to hold on what is recognized as traditional beauty. Moreover, this type shows the highest standard toward which younger craftspeople try to reach. This type of craft has become the highest standard of handmade craft in the society.

Type C in the Japanese traditional crafts allows craftspeople to express their ideas more freely by using their skills. This type would be the best example of the modern representation of *bijutsu kogei* in Meiji Japan. In this type of product, the craftspeople try to create new forms either as a self-expression or as a design solution. Type C also prepares the field where craft, art, and design may mingle in one object. This type also would be the best way to revitalize the traditional craft in a globalized era. This is because the appreciation of type C crafts will stimulate craftspeople, particularly the younger generation, to keep creating and utilizing the existed traditional techniques in many new forms.

Type D includes craft objects which could be produced in a larger quantity. The aim is to recreate what was known as *mingei* to become more widely produced by both the old and new techniques, and to be able to fulfil the market's needs. However, the production of new *mingei* has a higher aim than merely producing in a large quantity. This type of craft is a way to offer the experience of using craft products through many adaptations in the producing process and forms. They are good examples of the effort to bring traditional crafts more familiar to the young

generation that has no experience using authentic traditional crafts in daily life.

However, when these objects are not very well executed, then the original object's value is degraded, which then brings them to the level of similar industrially manufactured objects.

As mentioned earlier, Japan has more than just one aesthetic of the traditional idea of beauty, especially in the term of arts. These values are applied as well in the field of the Japanese traditional craft in contemporary society.

A respected *bijutsu kogeï* (or also known as *dento kogeï*) has to display the requisite techniques and materials. A good respect in processing material should be shown, and at the same time the final result should be flawless. The higher level of the craftsman's technique should be evidence, and the final product should be flawless. The very refined beauty of these objects is not appreciated from the point of utility.

On the other hand, utensils for the tea ceremony should not be ostentatiously beautiful. They are supposed to show a quiet and solemn beauty. All things inside the tearoom, and the tearoom itself, should be in harmony with other elements, and gaudiness is not welcomed. The tea ceremony world belongs to the upper class of the society. Despite the roughness and poorness of the appearance of these craft objects, they are appreciated very highly in the ceremonial circle. Because of this, tea utensils and other crafts object related to the tea ceremony are made exclusively and sold at an exceptionally high price.

*Mingei's* ideals, which emphasize the sincerity and frankness of the maker, resulted in the simple and rough look of the objects. The *mingei* movement also created a system where the craftspeople were allowed to produce their works in larger quantities because it was expected that the common people could own the craft and

used it in everyday life. Not only does the object have to be a familiar one in the daily life of the ordinary people, but *mingei* objects are also expected to be sold at an affordable price.

Each and every traditionally handmade object possibly contains one or more of the values of “beauty” mentioned above. It is not necessary to classify traditional crafts objects based on these values. The craft products show that these values exist, either as a single value or in combination.

The categorization of crafts has no impact on craftspeople. Their objective is just to make useful and beautiful works. The existence of different crafts exhibitions and groups, however, is a representation of awareness among the craftspeople of their identity and styles. It is important to recognize this phenomenon, since the concept and objectives that unite certain types of crafts are to be found in the products.

General users of functional objects pay less attention to the maker, the creating process, and where the materials come from. The user of traditional crafts, however, finds extra value in the products. The classification of the craft products might help to raise the awareness of common people regarding the values of the crafts invisible to the eyes.

Craftspeople or artisans in Japan are often much more than people who makes crafts. It is natural for a craftsperson to be merely a person who formerly was engaged in craft making as an occupation. They have skills and make a living using them. At this level, they could not only work by themselves, but also for other craftspeople or in a “maker,” the Japanese term for craft factory. Some also consider it as a process of learning, such as becoming apprentice or *deshi*. Some craftspeople continue to be this type of craftsperson; during *deshi* period, they might set up their workshop or work in someplace else. As for more experienced craftspeople, not only

are they considered as people who possess advanced skills or dexterity, but they may also pursue certain ideals. In other words, after reaching certain level of experience as a working craftsman, his or her ideals may become sublime, making craft becomes a way of life in which the craftsman puts all of his or her efforts in making their works, not merely to make things, but more likely to establish certain attitudes towards materials and towards other people who use their works. Such ideals are objectified in their final works.

As mentioned in the first chapter, craft has three elements: the decorative arts, the vernacular, and the politics of work. Considering these three elements, the traditional crafts of Japan can be analyzed as below.

The root of traditional crafts in Japan cannot be separated from the history of the traditional art. Since the initiation of tea ceremony as part of the Way, everything related to the tea ceremony is “art.” Even though the creators of these utensils refer themselves as craftspeople, their products are appreciated on a different level from mere crafts. The emergence of *mingei* movement in 1920’s then gradually promoted “mere” craft or folk art. By this time, the image of folk craft was elevated and gained societal appreciation. In the current context, the traditional craft of Japan cannot clearly be distinguished from traditional art. This is not because traditional craft and the folk craft originated from the same roots, but because the characteristics of both represent a very particular Japanese traditional identity.

As for the second element, the vernacular, they are well maintained by the standards of *denko kogei*. The other types of crafts might adopt un-vernacular elements, such those as taken from the contemporary crafts, and still be considered as the traditional crafts. The vernacular is identified according to how a craft was made or how it was used. The use of crafts as part of traditional customs, for example in

the tea ceremony, is supposedly considered as the vernacular.

The distinctive characteristics of the Japanese traditional crafts are influenced by the two factors, the tea ceremony and the *mingei* movement. These characteristics are particular to Japan and cannot be found in traditional crafts in other countries.

## **2. Indonesian Traditional Crafts**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Indonesia has at least two types of the traditional crafts: *kriya* and *kerajinan*. The type of crafts focused on in this study is the latter one. The *kerajinan* of bamboo crafts in West Java has recently developed into several types: *kerajinan rakyat* or folk crafts, *kerajinan kontemporer* or contemporary crafts, and *desain kerajinan* or crafts design.

The folk crafts type is made to fulfil the market's needs. It has a long history and has constantly been made for the daily use. The techniques are very traditional and simple, and there was almost no attention to details. The objects were made to be used and replaced easily. Therefore, the price is very cheap. This type of crafts is still sells well in the domestic markets of the low economic level, regardless of the quality and monotonous design. One of the peculiar characteristics of this type of crafts is the system of production. Not only in West Java but also in another region of Indonesia, the production system of folk crafts is based on the labor division within a certain village or hamlet. The relation between one craftsman to another is rarely professional and often familial.

Contemporary crafts appeared recently, approximately since the government started to involve designers and artists to improve the design of traditional crafts. Contemporary crafts have been developed especially in the production of decorative objects. In making objects, the utilitarian function is not carefully noticed. Therefore,

they are easier for the common craftspeople to make. The common craftspeople are usually engaged in crafts as a side job, apart from farming. These crafts sold relatively well as long as they are produced in large quantities with a low cost of production. This type of craft also initiated the emergence of a more professional labor division in villages. Some craftspeople switched to become middlemen and began to pay attention to quality because they did business with buyers.

Crafts design emerged later than the second type. Designers in collaboration with craftspeople initiated this type of crafts, and they aim at achieving a particular design. The designs usually belong to the designers and the craftspeople act as makers. This type of craft is likely to challenge the craftspeople to advance his or her skills and to explore new techniques. The development of craft is highly influenced by social and economic conditions. Recently, traditional craft developed towards this type of craft. The concepts often aimed at revitalizing the traditional crafts by creating new designs. The same concept can be applied not only to *kerajinan* but also to *kriya*.

Traditional crafts in Indonesia, unlike in Japan, have not been countering a particular period where the identity of the crafts was questioned and re-defined. A discussion about whether crafts are art or not is still happening. The *kerajinan* and *kriya* are perceived differently. Sometimes the efforts to preserve traditional values tend to rule out the *kerajinan*. The beauty of *kriya*, which is more respected than *kerajinan*, is more easily understood by common people because of its historical background. Meanwhile *kerajinan*, associated to the lower economic and aesthetic level of common people, is regarded as very common, and the beauty of the vernacular items of daily life is hard to be recognized. The low quality and inattention to detail make *kerajinan* harder to be accepted by the contemporary

market because of such a negative image. However, *kerajinan* has a distinctive character that reflects the common Indonesian lifestyle more than *kriya*, which originally was associated with higher-class people. Even though *kerajinan* is less appreciated aesthetically, it has virtues for society. This character exemplifies the second element of Greenhalgh's discussion of the vernacular.

*Kerajinan* was born from the life of common people. Not only does it have a role in fulfilling needs as daily utensils, but it also provides jobs for people, especially women. The simple techniques of *kerajinan* are easy to master, and the works are easy to share with others. In this sense, *kerajinan* has provided an opportunity to create a good relationship between craftspeople and contributed to realizing a harmonious life in a hamlet or village.

Making *kerajinan* is an open activity of village people. It is common to work outside the house, such as on the terrace. The works can be seen clearly by other neighbors or the passer-by. In the humid and hot climate of Indonesia, people tend to stay outside the house to feel cooler. As a result, craft rarely becomes the personal activity of the craftsman.

*Kerajinan* utilizes nature. In Sundanese culture, to live in harmony with nature is one of the most important principles of life. The traditional *kerajinan* always has rules for utilizing the nature. For example, most of the bamboo plant in Indonesia is the clustering type. They will grow bigger and healthier if the mature stems are cut at a particular period. The utilization of bamboo does not destroy the natural cycle as long as the rules are followed. The best time to cut bamboo for weaving is around the eighth month to one year, which also fits with the period of maturation of bamboo in general.

Kerajinan workers usually do not make products for themselves. The satirical proverb, *pande tara boga bedog*, which means “even a blacksmith never has a knife,” applies to craftspeople, who never make products for themselves. Instead, they make products for the market. Their products never tell about the makers.

Besides the virtues, the low quality of *kerajinan* should be noticed. The low quality of *kerajinan* comes from the attitudes of its makers. The pure craftspeople typically do not pay attention to details. They prefer the easy and fast way of doing things because the middlemen or craftsperson-traders control the pure craftspeople’s works, in which the goal is quantity, not quality. The craftspeople feel alienated from their work, unlike in previous era, when craft was a part of their daily life.

In addition, there seems to be a cycle regarding this problem. The buyer wants cheap crafts; the middlemen sets the production margin; the craftsperson has to finish on time; the craftsperson has less time to work; details are neglected; low quality crafts are produced; and crafts are sold at a low price. In this scenario, the craftsperson traders or the middlemen have the opportunity to raise the bargaining position of the crafts. This situation is related to the third element of crafts by identified by Greenhalgh – the politics of work.

### **3. Similarities of Japanese and Indonesia Traditional Crafts characteristics**

There are several similarities between the traditional crafts of Japan and Indonesia. These similarities are the main function of the crafts, the motivation of the craftsperson, the knowledge about materials, and the closeness to nature.

Both in Japan and Indonesia, crafts were originally made to fulfil daily needs.

Compared to the concept of “art,” crafts should fulfill a functional role rather than

merely being beautiful. Crafts also not only function to communicate the ideas of the maker but also to serve a specific utility to the user. In this sense, craft is closely related to the concept of “design” in the industrial field and are opposed to art as the main objective. To serve the utility function to the user, craftspeople are expected to produce more than one-offs. As a producer of objects used daily, craftspeople have several considerations in making an object. Firstly, they should consider about how the object will be used. They also should consider the maintenance of the object by the user. In addition, different from the makers of mass produced objects, craftspeople know very well how to repair their products if they are broken, either from use or accidentally. As products that can be used in the daily life, crafts should be made in certain quantities. Before industrial manufacturers started producing similar objects to those produced by craftspeople, the price of the crafts were determined by the agreement between maker and user. After similar objects were produced by the industrial system, the price of the crafts was not simply determined by such an agreement. Craftspeople are also able to offer added values in their crafts, more than only serving as functional objects. Despite this, mass produced products have slowly replaced the original function of crafts. Crafts, as mentioned by Mr. D, should be produced “*hayai, kirei, yasui*” or “quickly, neatly, cheaply” to be able to compete as functional products. Both the craftspeople from Yamanaka and from Tasikmalaya have maintained these ideals to create functional products.

Other than the main function of the crafts, the other similarity is the motivation of the craftspeople. From the findings in the field, both craftspeople from Yamanaka and from Tasikmalaya have a high motivation to create products of the best quality. They developed this motivation from years of experience. They realized that, as craftspeople, they should maintain and hone their skills to improve the quality

of their works. They always keep this motivation in their mind as they do their craft. Their highest achievement is to make a useful object with best quality by their hands. For them, a good product is not about having a high price, or simply selling well in the market. A craftsperson should make good quality crafts, regardless the quantity. In this case, craft is partly similar to art, where the motivation of the maker plays very important role in the object creation. The artist and the craftsperson have different aesthetic values as the motivation. For a craftsperson, the beautiful craft object should serve a utilitarian function for the user, while for an artist, beautiful art should be able to communicate emotionally with the viewer. Nevertheless, both artists and craftspeople are always motivated to gain these objectives while they are working. In this sense, a craftsperson, such as Mr. D in Yamanaka and Mr. Toto, is classified as artist-craftsperson. Different from a designer who works based on industrialized way of thinking, a craftsperson puts all of his or her effort to finish an object. A designer should always consider multiple aspects in the production process and must cooperate with other experts to finish an object.

Craftspeople always know the things that they are working with, especially their materials. They learned from the wisdom of nature. This makes them aware of the characteristics of the materials and to use them wisely. A bamboo craftsperson knows very well when the best time to cut the bamboo properly is, and the wood-turner knows very well when the wood is ready to be formed. A craftsperson's decision about the right moment to use a material is a very specific ability which is not possessed by other maker, such as artists or designers. Their seniors, such as mentors or teachers, often teach this ability. A craftsperson develops this sensitivity about the material by experience. A craftsperson is aware of the effect from not utilizing a material wisely. Bad handling of a material affects the quality of the final

product. For example, Mr. Toto and Mr. Mumus use very specific types of bamboo within certain age. They can use older bamboo to make a two-dimensional weaving. Meanwhile, to make more organic forms and three-dimensional weaving, they must use younger bamboo and dry it after the weaving is finished. In addition, a craftsman knows the age of bamboo by seeing the size of the fibers and the hardness and dryness of the bamboo. In this sense, craftsman is different from artist. An artist masters a skill or not, because the most important thing is the idea and the objective of the making. To master a skill or a craft, one must also understand the character of the material that is to be processed. Every craftsman knows how to treat materials, while not every artist knows this. A designer, in this sense, is also different from a craftsman. A designer's knowledge about a material is very general. This specific knowledge of a craftsman, however, is gained through long experience interacting with the material. With this knowledge, artist-craftspeople work securely if they work near the source of the material they are using. This situation is related to the next similarity between the Japanese and Indonesia craftsman, the closeness to nature.

As mentioned above, craftspeople work securely if they are close to the source of their material. In order to be able to utilize the material well, the craftsman should live close to nature. Craftspeople sense how a change in nature influences their work. Their knowledge and wisdom about materials reflect their closeness with nature. In this sense, a craftsman is different from artist and designer because their object is not limited to be produced from one specific natural material. A craftsman also grows a sense of closeness with nature to be able to utilize the best characteristics of the material. Craftspeople believe that their skill and ability is not all they need to create a good crafts. They must also respect nature for providing them the best

materials. They are also inspired by how nature works, such as the changes of the season or the forms that they can find in the nature. Nature provides much for craftspeople. Therefore, they believe that they are nothing without the nature. “Nature” refers to not only the natural environment surrounding them, but also the power beyond their own power, or what the Japanese refer to as the “Other Power” (*tariki*). In the case of Indonesian, we can also see the similar concept. The other power beyond the human’s own power is believed to be the God’s power, and God’s power will help them. In both cases, the artist-craftspeople believe that the power of nature contributes to their crafts.

#### **4. Differences between Japanese and Indonesia Traditional Crafts**

In addition to the similarities, we can also find the differences. There are at least three differences that can be concluded from the results. They are as follows: the nature of the craft-making characteristic, the development of the main function of the crafts, and the current situation of crafts activity related to the treatment from the government.

As we have seen in previous chapters, craftspeople in Japan usually work in their own workshop. It is a very personal and closed space. The craftspeople in Indonesia, on the other hand, do not have a special workshop. They work inside their house or in the terrace of their houses. It can be said that the crafts activity for a craftsman in Japan is very personal, while in Indonesia the crafts activity is very open and communal.

The traditional crafts activity in Japan and Indonesia are also different. This difference is related to the support given by the government in both countries. The Japanese government designated policies both to preserve and to promote their

traditional crafts. The traditional crafts industry was established as the local regional industry by the government, while at the same time, they preserve crafts activity by selecting a competent craftsman as the national living treasure. In addition, a national exhibition of the Japanese traditional crafts is held routinely every year. The exhibition selects the best works of the new and senior craftsman from all over Japan with specific requirements to be considered as the traditional craft or *kogei*. The strict requirements of the exhibition force the craftsman to utilize traditional materials and techniques that result in the preservation of traditional craft activity. Meanwhile, the designation of crafts as a regional industry pushes the region to be able to compete in the wider market.

In Indonesia, the government supports traditional crafts industry by developing crafts as an economic commodity. By orienting the development of the traditional crafts economically, the government pushes craftspeople to be able to produce crafts with better quality and in larger quantities. The craftsman also has to keep developing his or her products, so that the market can accept it. This development of traditional crafts activity related to the government is showing that the crafts are considered as the economical commodity instead of cultural commodity.

Due to the different types of support from the government, the development of the objectives of the crafts in both countries are going in different directions. Originally made to fulfil the practical function, crafts in Japan are now developed to at least three general functions. The first function is still to serve utilitarian functions, such as for daily utensils. The second one is to serve as practical function used in special occasions, such as the tea ceremony, New Year, or the *obon*. The third function is as the souvenirs. Lately, the third function of the crafts is fulfilled by imported products. Meanwhile in Indonesia, the development of function of crafts is

moving from the daily utensils to souvenirs. Crafts which serve function as daily utensils are produced in large quantities with very low quality. They are sold at a very cheap price. The largest market for Indonesia traditional crafts is as the souvenirs and utensils for special users, such as hotels or restaurants.

## **5. Conclusion**

Following the discussion above, we can conclude that there are important factors that influence the activity of the traditional crafts in Japan and Indonesia, such as the historical background, and the behavior or attitude of the craftsman.

The most important factor of all is the historical background. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Japan has two occasions or momentous events that played a big role in the activity of arts and crafts generally. The first one is the fruition of the tea ceremony as a Way (Way of Tea). The Way of Tea not only introduced tea as a social activity, but also disseminated aesthetic perspectives, such as irregularity and roughness. This concept is also known as *wabi-sabi*. The Way of Tea also resulted in a high appreciation for the traditional arts and crafts, for example Ikebana, ceramics, and calligraphy. The tea ceremony was only practiced among the high-class people; therefore appreciation of the arts and crafts related to the tea ceremony was limited to a social class. The *wabi sabi* resulted from the tea world in Japan; despite the rough look and the imperfection, the objects were very highly evaluated by the society and enjoyed by the high-class people.

The other influential event for the traditional crafts in Japan is the *mingei* or the Folk Crafts movement. The *mingei* movement was not simply a movement that aroused awareness of traditional crafts in Japan, but also exhibited a strong influence on the whole idea of arts and crafts in the modern period of Japan. This movement,

which was initiated by the philosopher Yanagi Soetsu, emphasized the ideals of beautiful craft, such as the beauty of roughness and irregularity of as a result of the pureness of the craftsman. During the flourishing of *mingei* theory, the folk crafts of Japan gained highest appreciation from the society. The ideas of the *mingei* movement are also said to be the anti-thesis of the tea ceremony, which was merely belonged to the rich people. Yanagi, in his theory, emphasized that a good craft should be made to be used in everyday life. Different from the crafts made for the tea ceremony or the crafts that made for the people who practiced the tea ceremony, the *mingei* belonged to the common people. These two significant events resulted in the current situation of the traditional crafts in Japan, where assessment of the beauty of a craft can be understood from both ideals.

Meanwhile in Indonesia, there has never been a significant historical event related to the arts and crafts, especially for traditional crafts. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the traditional crafts of Indonesia, especially the bamboo weaving in West Java, originated at least as early as the kingdom period, earlier than the forming of Indonesia as a country. During this period, traditional crafts consisted of two different groups: *kriya* and *kerajinan*. Bamboo weaving crafts belong to the latter group and were made for the needs for daily utensils. During the colonization period, the traditional arts and crafts were oppressed by the Dutch and could not grow. In the 1800's, there was an emergence of the painter, initiating the modern art of Indonesia. Until the end of the colonization period in Indonesia, the fine arts of Indonesia, such as painting and sculpture, were developed and still continue in the modern era. However, the traditional crafts were not developed accordingly. During the colonization period, the crafts were developed based on the needs of the Dutch. For example, the crafts factory was built to supply the needs of the war, such as

making clothes or uniforms. Around 1811, the traditional crafts factory for batik, metal, and carving were being built to supply the export commodity. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Dutch Ethical Policy built schools to teach crafts technique to the people. After the independence of Indonesia was declared, modern art of Indonesia was developed mostly as the reaction of the concerns toward the current government at that time. Meanwhile the traditional crafts were developed under the supervision of Ministry of Industry after the Indonesia's declaration of independence. This situation resulted in the further gap between the developments of arts and crafts in Indonesia. The regional traditional arts were also not considered as the part of the arts, instead, they are considered as *kerajinan* and are expected to be able to compete with mass produced products.

The next reason of the difference is the general characteristics of the people in both countries. This characteristic is especially related to the people's work ethics. From the general character of Japanese, there is a particular character of general people and it is known as the Craftsperson Spirit or the "*shokunin kishitsu*." *Shokunin* in this term is not limited to the definition of craftsperson. Instead, it refers to the mastery of one's profession. The term was first known as the pride and way of thinking of the Edo working classes. The most important point is the sense of pride. It is about taking pride of what someone does, no matter what job he or she is doing. The craftsperson spirit is also about elevating the area of mastery that someone practices. It is about making steady refinements to anything and everything. It is also about having the most to learn and accomplish. This craftsperson spirit not only can be found in the field of the craft making, but almost in every aspect of working in Japan.

In Indonesia, according to Koentjaraningrat (1961), there are at least two types of characteristics: the mentality of city and the mentality of villagers. Since traditional crafts generally can be found in the villages, the characteristics of the craftsperson can be represented by the latter category. General characteristics of the villagers as mentioned by Koentjaraningrat are as follows:

- Villagers work hard to eat
- The living orientation of villagers is determined by the present life
- Humans should live in harmony with nature
- Live equally with the other people around one
- Mutual aid or *gotong royong*

The characteristics mentioned above not only have positive impacts on crafts activity, but also negative ones. For example, the villagers are living in harmony with nature, other people, and always doing good deeds for the people around them. These characteristics have contributed to the survival of the craft activity in the village. Meanwhile, the living orientation of the villagers is possibly one of the disadvantageous characteristics of the people in regards to craft quality. Also, since people are mostly working hard to fill their stomachs, once the need for food was fulfilled, they do not work to greater extent. In addition, their living orientation is the present, means that they are not very motivated to put more efforts in things that only useful in the future.

## **Chapter Five: Suggestions**

Traditional craft in Indonesia is one of the cultural treasures that have contributed to the production of artifacts. Among the various handmade objects considered as traditional crafts, only a few have survived stunningly nowadays amongst modern artifacts. These crafts struggled and finally attained a respectable position in the market through re-designing or by maintaining their originality. However, despite the struggle and confusion regarding the place of traditional crafts in the current context, there is still an abundance of potential for traditional crafts all over Indonesia.

Even though there are already many efforts trying to develop traditional crafts in Indonesia, craft as an activity is still facing difficulties surviving in the modern era. This study is an attempt to initiate research in traditional crafts as activities instead of as objects. This point of view is expected to contribute to traditional craft development in Indonesia through preserving the living traditional craft activity. Using the design anthropology approach, which is still developing in many ways, will help promote new designs and innovation in traditional crafts while also respecting local knowledge and processes.

This study examined two case studies, Yamanaka lacquerware in Japan and bamboo weaving crafts from Tasikmalaya, Indonesia. Both cases were chosen to represent traditional crafts which originated as regional craft industries. Both cases are also known to have been practiced for a long time while utilizing materials from the surrounding environment. In addition, as regional craft industries, both of the cases practice the labor divisions of their area.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, traditional crafts in Japan and Indonesia have similarities and differences. From these points, we can determine the cause of the distinctive characteristics of each country's crafts.

Japanese traditional crafts have a long continuing history from ancient times until today, and the two most important moments in the development of crafts were the tea ceremony and the initiation of the *mingei* movement.

Even though *mingei* literally means “folk craft,” it is not merely *mingei* that forms the idea of general traditional craft in Japan. However, it is undeniable that the *mingei* theory and its impact have contributed to the identity of Japanese traditional crafts. Therefore, considering this concept and other discourses about traditional crafts of Japan, traditional crafts can be categorized into at least four types. This classification categorizes crafts based on their tangible values, such as practical utility, techniques, design, and quantity. The existence of these types in Yamanaka lacquerware (the study case) has led to a somewhat idealized condition, which became a supportive factor for the preservation and revitalization of traditional crafts.

As for the traditional crafts of Indonesia, they can be divided historically into two broad categories: *kriya* and *kerajinan*. In the case of Tasikmalaya bamboo weaving, the crafts are categorized as *kerajinan*. In the contemporary context, the type of crafts made by a craftsperson in Tasikmalaya can be divided into at least three types. This classification demonstrates the virtues and weakness of traditional crafts in Indonesia as represented by the situation in Tasikmalaya. These virtues and weaknesses of *kerajinan* potentially could contribute to the attempts of revitalization and preservation of the traditional crafts of Indonesia in the future.

## **Suggestions for Traditional Crafts Design Development and Preservation in Indonesia (Case study: Bamboo weaving craft in Tasikmalaya)**

According to the results of this research (as mentioned earlier), we can conclude that the effort of traditional craft development in Indonesia should not only focus on innovation and finding new designs, but it also should consider other aspects regarding traditional crafts to allow the preservation of traditional craft activity to serve as one of the cultural resources that represent regional identity.

Based on the findings, there are several particular characteristics of the traditional crafts of Indonesia. As we are already aware, art, craft, and design in Western culture originated from the same root: Art. Meanwhile, the traditional craft in Indonesia, referred to in this study as *kerajinan*, has a different historical connection with “art” and “design.” Therefore, to develop new designs for traditional craft in Indonesia, we not only have to apply the ability of ‘design thinking’, but we are also expected to have a deeper understanding of the local culture that surrounds traditional craft activity as a whole.

According to this study, I propose this following strategy for the *kerajinan* design development and preservation. The strategy includes the anthropologically informed design development for the case study of bamboo weaving crafts in Tasikmalaya, West Java. The strategy is represented in the chart below:

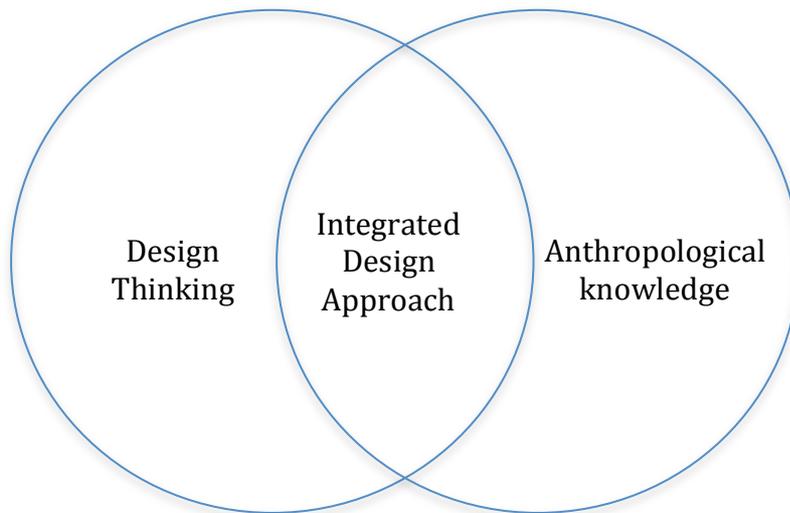


Chart of traditional craft development and preservation strategy

Design Thinking includes the efforts of product designers to develop the objects of traditional craft. This part has been done in Indonesia, especially since the government has involved artists and designers to encourage the craftspeople to create new designs. The practical approaches of this idea usually involves collaborations among the craftspeople and designers to explore new ideas or new techniques. The results of these approaches are new designs using advanced techniques, or classic designs used for new or different functions. Recently, there has been a tendency towards more advanced collaborations among the designers and craftspeople to expand the use of traditional crafts for more innovative designs that are related with the modern lifestyle. It cannot be denied that this approach has succeeded in making traditional crafts in Indonesia more familiar in modern life. However, this approach focuses on traditional crafts as objects. This approach seeks answers for such questions as how the object can provide new functions, how the techniques can be improved to make new designs, how the identity of local culture can still be seen in the new designs, and so on. This approach does not yet focus on traditional crafts as a

community's activity. This is why this method merely involves various craftspeople instead of the whole community. Moreover, the new designs are frequently alien to the makers.

The information gathered by ethnographic methods in a crafts community is very important to realize the aims of traditional crafts activity preservation. This study has found that the traditional crafts of Indonesia have several characteristics that make them different from Japanese traditional crafts. Analysis of this finding provides anthropological knowledge about Indonesian communities: Examples include the historical background of the *kerajinan*, the natural conditions, and, last but not least, the particular characteristics of the typical craftspeople and the people of the society. Using this knowledge, I propose the integrated design approach as follows:

**Innovation in new traditional craft design.** This approach uses two different methods: collaboration between designers or artists and the craftspeople, and using a participatory design approach.

**Collaboration.** This method has been used by the government's program, academic institutions, and independently by mostly young artisans in their ventures. For this method, the designer, artist, or company orders particular designs from the craftsmen and then sells the products. The collaboration encourages craftsmen to explore new techniques and widen their knowledge about new designs.

**Participatory design.** This second method is rarely used, since it requires more time and effort, and that would extend the time needed for the production process. The participatory design approach is not appropriate for the mass-production process because of this. In the future, the creation of new designs should not only consider new functions or new forms, but also the skill of the craftspeople and the

availability of the raw materials. The development of new designs should become less mass- production oriented and start to promote the values of the local culture.

**Community design.** Local people, especially young people in rural areas, tend to leave their villages and work in factories because craftmaking cannot provide the needed income for their lifestyle. Even so, young people who have a deep interest in bamboo weaving are still working as craftspeople even though they have to move to other places and work for someone else. The people who still have a deep interest in living in their villages and practicing bamboo weaving can be the motor of community design. Designers contribute the participatory design approach, where they facilitate a group or a family of craftspeople to work together on one project. In this sense, the designers, as facilitators, should not offer their designs and instead concentrate on motivating the craftspeople to share ideas as much as possible before deciding on the new designs. With this method, the designer's role is as a facilitator or consultant. It is expected that the participatory design approach will lead to a nostalgia for working together among the people and motivate them to love their homes and activities even more.

**Rural tourism.** The characteristics of the Sundanese, such as being friendly, bright, and cheerful not only to the people they already know but also to guests, make them suitable hosts to promote tourism. The production of simple and low-priced *kerajinan* is still going on and should be encouraged to continue. Making this *kerajinan* was originally a communal activity by the local people. Therefore, the activity of the local people will allow the visitors to see the real process and interact with the makers. The fact that they are also very open and will teach anyone who wants to learn bamboo weaving is an asset, so that visitors can experience the process of bamboo weaving and learn. By understanding the process to make even simple

forms, it is expected that tourists will increase their appreciation of handmade objects, especially of traditional crafts.

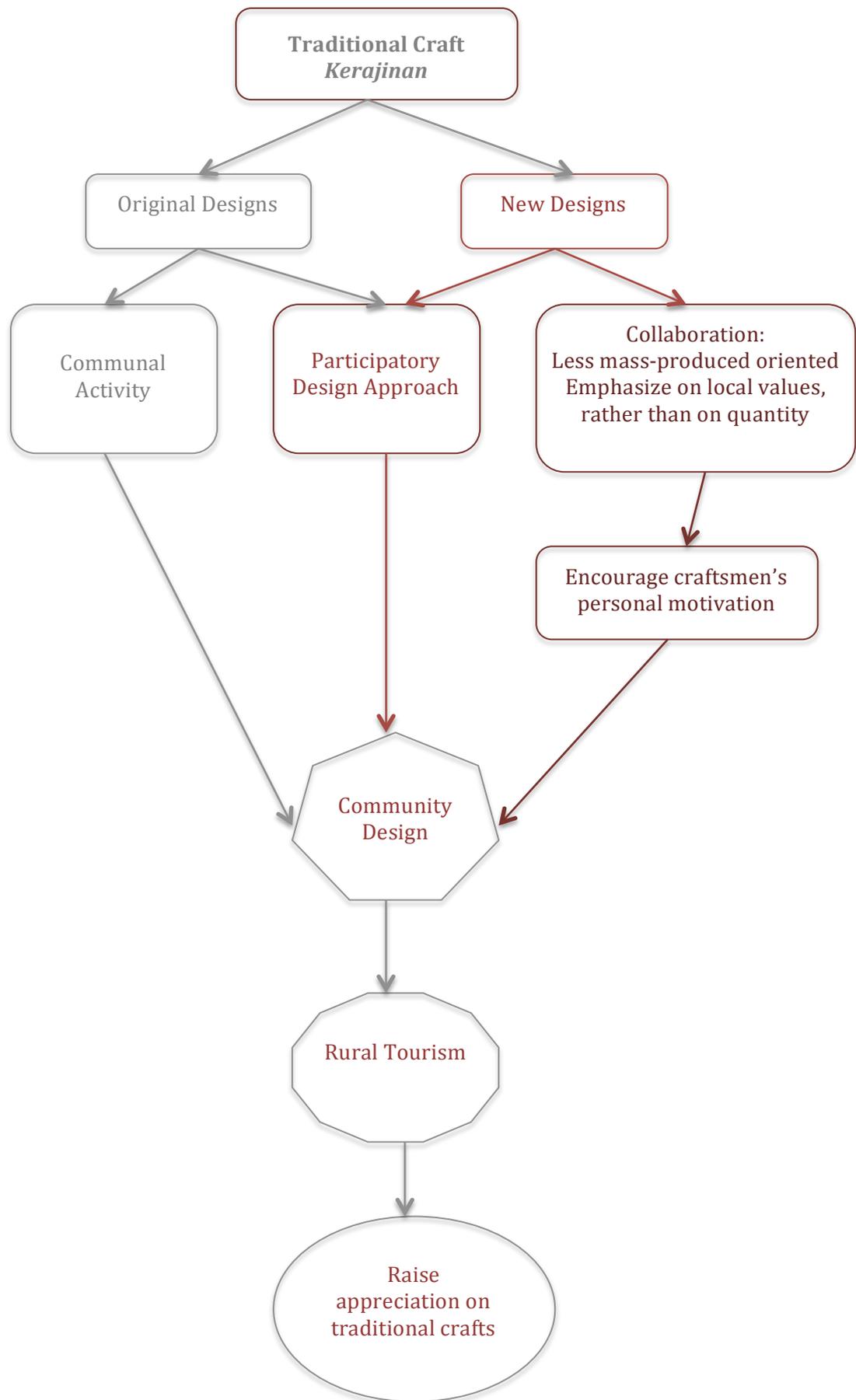


Chart of Integrated Design Approach for developing traditional craft design

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