

Banana Trunk: From Fiber to Paper

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Abstract

This article elaborates a social innovation practice made by a small group of people in Bandung West Java. The idea of this innovation is to use banana trunk as raw material for paper making. This article explains the manufacturing process of paper making by using banana trunks as raw material. Implementing a simple process, firstly the trunks are chopped into pieces. Next the pieces are dried under the sunshine. The dried pieces are then boiled. The next step is to blend the boiled pieces to make them jelly. The jelly is shaped in wood plates to make papers in the desired form and size. The plates are sunbathed to dry the jelly. The dried jelly now becomes papers.

Keywords: Social Innovation, Banana Trunk, Raw Material, Paper Making

A. Business Background

It is undeniable that papers are very important in people's lives. They deal with paper products from the time they start and finish the day.

It is also undeniable that the products made of papers result in the activities of deforestation. Paper companies obtain the raw materials from forests by means of exploiting the richness of tree resources in the forests. This situation happens almost in every country which has an abundance of tree resources. As a result of the deforestation, there is an imbalance of natural cycles that bring about disaster like landslides, drought, mobility disorder of the animals, etc.

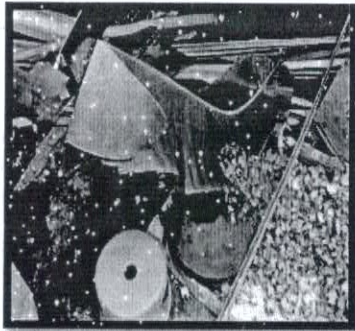
It is widely known that papers are made of fibers. Trees are not the only material that contains fibers. There are a lot of plants that produce fibers. They are banana trunk, enceng gondok (*Eichhornia crassipes*), ilalang (*Imperata cylindrical*) etc. Since the plants are full of fibers, papers are able to be produced from those plants.

There are some home industries that manufacture papers from the fibers of the plants. One of them is CV. Shuhuf Kertas Seni that is located Jl. Curug Dago No 7 RT 02 RW 08 Bandung. This home industry has been in paper recycling and manufacturing since in 1998. It has 10 employees who are managed by Mrs Imas Komariyah. It manufactures papers to create artistic handy-craft like tissue box, paper bags, corporate souvenirs, book cover, wrappers, etc.

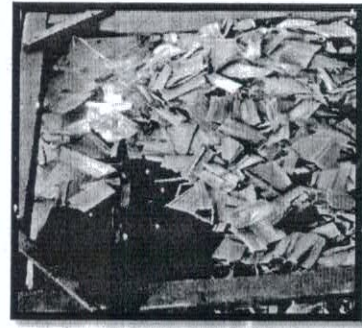
This paper is to explain the manufacturing process of paper making based on my observation on business activities than Shuhuf Kertas seni has run. Besides, it also discusses the marketing activities it has done so far based on my depth interview with Mrs Imas Komariyah on 10th October 2014.

B. Manufacturing Process

There are some steps to manufacture the papers. Firstly, the banana trunks are chopped into pieces. The pieces are dried under the sunshine. It takes 2 or 3 days to dry. It depends on the weather.



Chopping the trunks

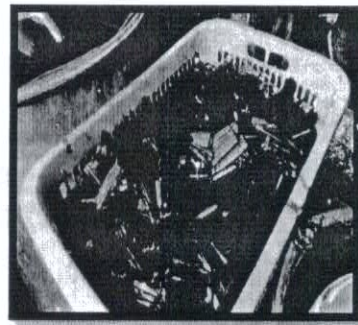


Drying the pieces

The next step is to boil the dried pieces. It takes 1,5 - 2 hours to boil the pieces. The boiled pieces turn into soft pieces.

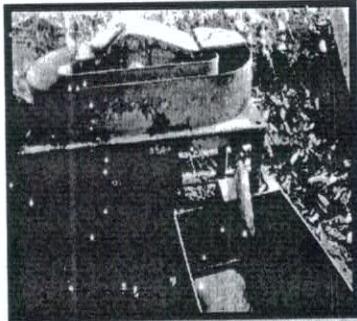


Boiling the dried pieces

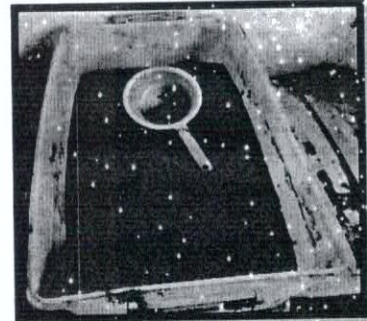


The Soft Pieces after being boiled

The soft pieces are then blended to produce jelly. Just in case we make colored papers, then we dye the jelly in this step. And the jelly is ready to be shape into paper size.

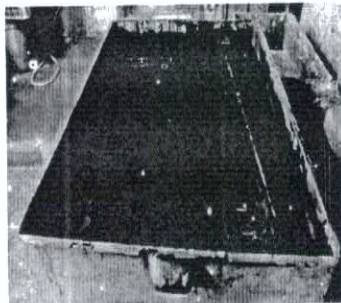


Blending soft pieces



Jelly after being blended

The jelly is then shaped into paper size by using a shaping tool like canvas. The jelly is shook in the water. The cloth in the shaping tool separates the jelly and the water. It then sticks to the cloth as thick as paper.

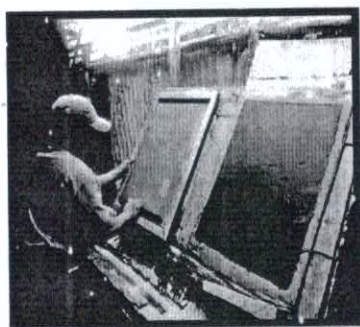


Shaping the jelly

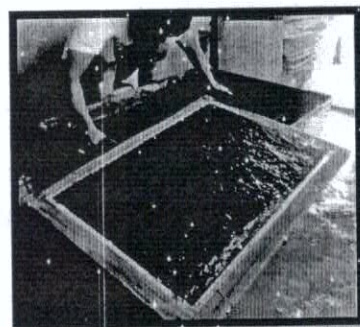


Separating the jelly from the water

The paper sized jelly is transferred to thin wood board. The jelly is attached on to the board.

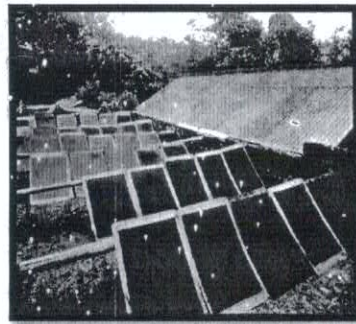


Transferring the jelly



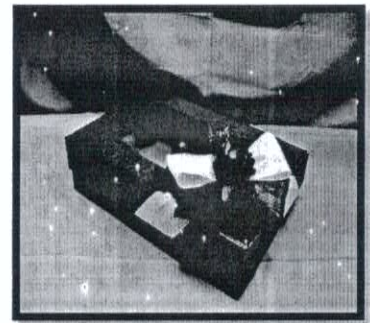
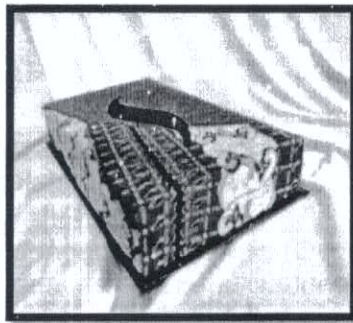
Paper size jelly on board

As the final step of making papers, the paper size jelly on a board is dried under the sunshine.



Drying Paper size jelly

When the jelly is completely dried, it turns into papers that can be artistic materials for creating handy-crafts such as tissue box, frames, gift wrappers, etc.



The products are sold in Gramedia and Gunung Agung Book Stores. Shuhuf Kertas Seni displays its products in a small gallery in the house. The customers can directly see a variety of the products it sells. Shuhuf kertas seni also create some tailor made products, especially for corporate merchandises.

This home industry also sells its products online. It has a simple blog where the prospect customers can interact with the owner. Besides, the owner makes presentation on how to create products with artistic papers form community to community, schools, companies etc.

E. Conclusion and Suggestion

It is proven that banana trunks can produce papers. Traditionally manufactured, the papers are still rough on the surface. Having more researches on technology that can be applied to create fine papers is needed. With a hope that paper manufacturing company can use banana trunks as the alternative of raw material of paper making.

It is advisable that the government helps the home industries in this field finance their operation by giving them access to banks and other financial institution. Besides, the government encourages universities to develop technologies for banana paper making. With a hope the forests can be saved.

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