

## Learning from the third world

Westerners could learn from the rest of the world about how to accommodate the body's needs for a variety of postures.

**Gordon Hewes, the anthropologist who studied posture, agrees that the so-called First World has much to learn from the Third.**

**At present nearly all our complex tools, instrument panels, control boards, benches, lathes, etc., have been planned for the use of people accustomed to the postural traditions of Western cultures.**

Human engineers might profitably consider a wider range of postures in planning for working or resting space requirements, not only because some of our traditional postures may be less efficient than those employed by Asians or Africans, but also because it might be easier to train our people to use a wider range of postures than to keep on trying to fit furniture designed for drawing rooms, throne rooms or banquet halls into crowded quarters...

Hewes continues, "We ought to go much further and explore the possible usefulness to us of the various cross-legged, squatting, kneeling and other postures which so many millions of people outside the orbit of Western civilization have found convenient for their daily work." By looking at the diversity of culture, we reinforce the idea that chair design is a cultural product and not a biological given, find inspiration for change, and offer physical models to give people options within an environment.

G. Cranz

*From The chair: rethinking culture, body and design  
(WW Norton: New York and London, 2000)*