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Cultural Crossovers: Danish Furniture Design And Its Impact On Indonesia's Rattan Furniture Industry

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Abstract

Indonesia, a major rattan producing country, has a long history of making rattan furniture. Traditionally, rattan furniture is seen as cheap and fragile, mostly associated with lower economic classes. However, in the 1970s, some Indonesian design educators and practitioners began to change this perception by introducing modern design principles inspired by Scandinavian furniture design in particular Denmark. This shift brought rattan furniture into the realm of high-quality mid-to-high-end furniture. This paper explores the influence of Danish design on the early development of modern rattan furniture in Indonesia through two main channels: product design concepts accessed through international design media, and the academic influence brought by Indonesian designers studying in Scandinavian countries. Using comparative study methods, this research reveals how Indonesian designers have successfully translated Danish design values—traditionally applied to wood—into rattan furniture, creating a modern design identity rooted in global aesthetics and local materials.

Keywords: modern rattan furniture, furniture design, Scandinavian design, Danish furniture design, Indonesian rattan furniture development.

Introduction

Danish furniture design as part of Scandinavian design has become globally recognized for its minimalist aesthetic, functionality, and respect for natural materials, particularly wood[1,2]. Characterized by clean lines and a comfortable, human-centered approach (hygge), Danish design has been a significant influence on modern furniture trends worldwide. A central figure in the emergence of this design philosophy was Kaare Klint (1888–1954), often referred to as the father of Danish modern furniture design. Klint established the Furniture Department at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine

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Arts in 1924, where he emphasized a design methodology rooted in human scale, proportion, and craftsmanship[3,4]. His iconic works, including the *Faaborg Chair* (1914) and *Safari Chair* (1933), set the foundation for Danish modernism, blending classical forms with functional modern design[5]. Klint's legacy shaped a generation of designers, including Hans J. Wegner and Børge Mogensen, and defined the international identity of Danish furniture design[1,6].

Indonesia, home to approximately 85% of the world's rattan resources[7], also has a strong craft-based furniture tradition. However, rattan was traditionally viewed as cheap and fragile. In the 1970s, efforts by Indonesian designers and academics began shifting this perception, bringing rattan furniture into the realm of modern design. Central to this transformation was the adoption of Scandinavian design principles, both through media exposure and educational exchange.

Alongside the development of wooden furniture, Indonesia has also pursued the advancement of rattan furniture within a modern design framework[8]. As the world's leading rattan producer, Indonesia holds a unique position in rattan-based design. Historically valued as both a trade commodity and a traditional material for furniture-making, rattan has deep cultural and economic significance. To modernize its rattan furniture sector, however, Indonesia must adopt design references that align with the realities of its domestic furniture industry, which continues to rely heavily on artisanal craftsmanship and low-tech production methods.

While Nicolai de Gier[9] claims that Indonesian designers have shown limited interest in rattan furniture and have remained largely disconnected from global design trends. This perspective ignores the active efforts made by Indonesian designers since the 1970s. In fact, a significant transformation began when local designers began to incorporate international design influences, especially Scandinavian modernism, into the production of rattan furniture. This article examines the stylistic orientation of early modern rattan furniture in Indonesia and its references to global trends, with a focus on Scandinavian, particularly Danish design principles. The study highlights the pioneering role of Imam Buchori Zainuddin. In the early 1970s, his design work marked a turning point in repositioning rattan from a low-status material to one with aesthetic and functional value in modern furniture design. The purpose of this paper is to examine the extent and nature of the influence of Scandinavian design—especially Danish mid-century modernism—on the evolution of Indonesian rattan furniture. This paper aims to examine how the philosophies and practises of Scandinavian furniture design, especially Danish design, shaped the emergence of modern rattan furniture in Indonesia. It focuses on early contributions by design educators and practitioners who introduced Scandinavian values into local material and cultural contexts.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative historical approach to investigate the impact of mid-century Scandinavian design on the development of rattan

furniture in Indonesia. The methodology integrates two primary components: a review of relevant literature and focused case studies. The literature analysis draws from design history references, academic publications, and archival materials to identify the defining features of Scandinavian modern furniture and trace the evolution of Indonesia's rattan furniture sector. Sources were carefully selected to encompass both a comprehensive overview of modern design movements and in-depth perspectives specific to Indonesian furniture traditions. An interview was conducted with Imam Buchori Zainuddin and Gorm Harkær. Imam Buchori Zainuddin played a significant role in the formative years of modern rattan furniture design in Indonesia. As a professor in the Product Design Department at ITB, he was also a pioneering figure in the development of contemporary rattan furniture in the country. Meanwhile, Gorm Harkær is known as the author of a monograph on Kaare Klint, published through klintiana.dk.

Early Encounters between Danish Design and Indonesian Furniture Traditions

The following story, which can be said to be the initial stage of the meeting of Danish design and Indonesian furniture traditions, was conveyed by Gorm Harkær who became the author's lecturer when the author had the opportunity to be a guest student in the spring semester of 1997 at Arkitekskole Copenhagen Denmark. At the time, Harkaer was conducting in-depth research on Kaare Klint, a figure in the modernization of Danish and Scandinavian furniture design in general. The results have already been published in book form and can be viewed on klintiana.dk.

The earliest recorded encounter between Indonesian furniture making and Danish furniture design occurred between 1914 and 1916, when Kaare Klint—who would later be known as the father of modern Danish furniture design—visited and lived in Semarang, Central Java, in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). During his stay there, Klint not only visited historical sites such as the Borobudur Temple in Magelang but also recreated the design of the iconic Faaborg Chair. The chair was commissioned by Knud Gjellerup, a Danish doctor working for the Dutch colonial government in Semarang, who ordered six versions of the chair made from teak by a local cabinetmaker. After retiring in the 1930s, Gjellerup returned to Denmark with the chairs[10]. Gordon Campbell further notes that during his time in Java, Klint collaborated with a Chinese furniture maker who created the chair of his design. Klint's work in Semarang—especially the creation of the Faaborg Chair—marks a significant early interaction between Scandinavian design and Indonesian furniture-making traditions[11]. This historical moment is a fundamental example of the direct Scandinavian influence on Indonesian furniture design at an early stage.

It is likely that the Faaborg chair commissioned by Gjellerup was made in Jepara, northeast of Semarang. Jepara Regency has long been known as a centre of woodcarving and furniture craftsmanship, with a history that predates the Dutch colonial period[8].Given the tendency of local craftsmen to imitate foreign furniture designs, it is reasonable to assume that some may

have copied the Faaborg Chair. They may also have produced locally adapted versions based on Kaare Klint's original design after Knud Gjellerup's departure (Fig. 1). However, no formal research has examined the extent of Klint's influence on the evolution of wooden furniture design in Indonesia. If evidence of Klint's legacy in Java—specifically in Jepara—can be identified and traced, it would be a valuable contribution to the historical development of Indonesian furniture design. This highlights the need for further research to investigate possible links between Klint's work and Jepara's woodcraft industry traditions.

Fig. 1. *Faaborg Chair* by Kaare Klint (left) and a chair made in Jepara. ©*1stdbibs* & author collection.

Academic Transmission of Danish Design Principles

The second major avenue through which Scandinavian design influenced Indonesian furniture was academic in nature. This influence was gained directly through Indonesian designers who had the opportunity to study in Denmark and other Scandinavian countries. These overseas educational experiences enabled the absorption of Scandinavian design philosophy, emphasizing functionality, material honesty, and human-centered aesthetics.

The earliest Indonesian designer known to have studied in Scandinavia was Imam Buchori Zainuddin, a graduate of the Art Education Program at the Faculty of Art and Design (FSRD), Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB). After completing his studies, he joined the faculty and also worked professionally producing plywood furniture and lighting designs. In 1970, he was appointed as the exhibition officer for the Indonesian Pavilion at the World Expo in Osaka, Japan—an experience that significantly broadened his design perspective.

In 1972, Zainuddin was awarded a scholarship to study Industrial Design at Arkitektskolen in Copenhagen. There, he was mentored by Professor Erik Herlow. He was also greatly influenced by Professor Victor Papanek, an American visiting scholar known for advocating socially responsible design practices, particularly in developing countries. Papanek's philosophy of socially responsible design—particularly within the context of the Global South—profoundly shaped Zainuddin's design ethos[12]. During his time in Copenhagen, Zainuddin explored Danish modern design firsthand by visiting showrooms along Strøget and became particularly interested in the

works of Hans J. Wegner and Finn Juhl. Their furniture exemplified a balance of ergonomic function, elegant form, and respect for natural materials [5,6].

Upon his return to Indonesia, Zainuddin began teaching at the newly established Industrial Design Department at ITB in 1972. He played a fundamental role in shaping the educational direction of this Department. He incorporated into his teaching both the Scandinavian design ethos and the critical, socially engaged framework introduced by Papanek. Regarding Papanek's influence on his understanding of design, he stated:

> Even though I studied furniture design in Denmark, because the one who taught me most was Victor Papanek, I absorbed more of his teachings[13].

Scandinavian Design Across Borders: Education Through Print and Pedagogy

In addition to formal academic pathways, Scandinavian design also reached Indonesian designers and architects through print media, particularly during the 1970s. International design magazines and publications played a crucial role in spreading Scandinavian modernism. They helped disseminate its visual language, ideology, and values to a broader audience. These printed materials, often imported or circulated among design schools, played an important educational role. They introduced Indonesian practitioners to the minimalist aesthetics, ergonomic sensibilities, and material consciousness that defined Danish and Nordic furniture design. Together with educational experiences abroad, these sources served as complementary channels of influence. Through them, Scandinavian design principles were absorbed, interpreted, and adapted within the Indonesian design context.

Fig. 2. *Charlottenborg Chair* (1946) by A. Jacobsen. © *sika-design.*

Among the most influential publications were *Design from Scandinavia*, *Living Architecture*, and *Design in Finland*, which circulated widely among Indonesian academic and professional design communities. These periodicals not only showcased exemplary works of furniture, architecture, and interior design from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland. They also communicated the core values of Scandinavian design—simplicity, functionality, and an appreciation for natural materials. For Indonesian designers who had limited direct access to Scandinavian

education or travel, these magazines served as vital sources of inspiration and informal education. The photographs, floorplans, and designer interviews featured in these publications helped convey the aesthetic language and social philosophy of Scandinavian modernism.

A notable example of Scandinavian furniture design is the Charlottenborg Chair, created by Arne Jacobsen in 1936 (Fig. 2). This piece demonstrates the modern potential of rattan as a material for contemporary furniture design. Its use of rattan aligns closely with Indonesia's status as a leading rattan producer, making it especially relevant and inspirational for Indonesian designers aiming to develop modern rattan furniture. As a result, they strongly influenced the visual preferences and design approaches adopted by Indonesian architects and furniture designers during the 1970s and beyond.

Early Modernization of Rattan Furniture in Indonesia

The development of modern rattan furniture design in Indonesia began in 1973 through a collaborative training initiative. The Institute for Research, Education, and Information of Social and Economy (LP3S), one of the NGOs in Indonesia, collaborated with the German-based Friedrich Naumann Stiftung. Together, they invited Imam Buchori Zainuddin to lead a training programme for rattan craftsmen from Tegalwangi, Cirebon—a prominent rattan production centre in Indonesia. Working alongside colleagues from the Faculty of Art and Design at Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB), Buchori coordinated a six-month training course hosted at ITB, involving approximately 56 artisans[13]. The programme aimed to equip participants with foundational skills in design drawing, material knowledge, contemporary finishing techniques, and business management. During this period, Imam Buchori himself developed a deeper understanding of rattan as a material and its processing techniques. The primary goal of the training was to transform the public perception of Tegalwangi's rattan products. These items were previously seen as cheap, disposable, and outdated, but the aim was to reposition them as high-quality indoor furniture appealing to upper-class consumers and aligned with modern aesthetic standards.

Fig. 3. *Srigunting Chair* (1973), by Imam Buchori Zainuddin. © I.B.Z.

The outcomes of the training were showcased in an exhibition held at Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta. The event attracted significant attention from the public, the press, and government institutions. Media coverage largely highlighted the innovative shift in design and the increased diversity of product types. This marked a clear departure from the previous perception

of Tegalwangi rattan goods as cheap and outdated. Imam Buchori Zainuddin presented one of his designs at the exhibition called Srigunting (Fig. 3), which stood out among the displays and received a high number of orders from visitors[13]. The success of the exhibition marked a breakthrough in the perception of rattan furniture. It also laid the foundation for Imam Buchori Zainuddin's enduring influence in both the design education sector and the national furniture industry. His experience during the training programme—particularly his firsthand engagement with rattan as both a material and a cultural product—had a lasting impact. It deeply informed his pedagogical approach at the Faculty of Art and Design, Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB). He emphasised material literacy, structural rationality, and cultural relevance as cornerstones of design practice. Zainuddin encouraged his students and peers to explore rattan not simply as a craft medium, but as a vehicle for modern design expression that could stand on equal footing with international trends. Over time, his vision helped catalyze a new generation of designers committed to reimagining indigenous materials within a global design discourse. By bridging modernist ideals with local craftsmanship, Imam Buchori played a critical role in shaping a distinct identity for modern Indonesian furniture. This identity is both rooted in tradition and responsive to contemporary aesthetic and functional standards.

In 1974, Imam Buchori Zainuddin was invited by his former ITB classmate, Farouk Kamal—one of five brothers managing the Kamal Furniture factory in Jakarta—to develop a new line of rattan-based furniture[13]. The Kamal family had deep roots in the Indonesian furniture industry, and one of the brothers, Taufik Kamal, who studied architecture in Sweden, was particularly focused on advancing production technologies through the development of machinery for both wood and rattan processing. This collaboration marked a turning point in the aesthetic and technical language of rattan furniture in Indonesia. For the first time, designs were intentionally left unwrapped, exposing the skeletal framework rather than concealing it beneath layers of woven wicker. These visible structural elements were not only functional but also embraced as decorative features, showcasing the raw beauty and constructional logic of rattan itself.

Drawing on the Danish or Scandinavian design principles he had long admired, Imam Buchori approached the project by emphasizing material efficiency and structural clarity—two core tenets of modern design[14]. Rattan and bentwood share similar physical properties, particularly their capacity to form curved lines—an essential characteristic of organic design. Rattan, in particular, can be shaped using relatively simple technology, making it an ideal material for creating fluid, modern forms. Recognizing this potential, Imam Buchori Zainuddin developed a rationalized production method aimed at standardizing quality and streamlining the manufacturing process. This shift marked a significant transition from traditional, craft-based rattan production toward an industrial design framework.

As a result of this innovation, seating designs became increasingly diverse in form while maintaining structural clarity and functional logic. This approach contrasted sharply with conventional rattan furniture, which was

often defined by excessive ornamentation. Zainuddin's adoption of a formalist design philosophy had a profound impact on the modernization of rattan furniture in Indonesia. In addition, he introduced new finishing techniques, applying various colors beyond the natural tones traditionally used in rattan. This move reflected a sensitivity to contemporary design aesthetics and contributed to the emergence of a distinctly modern visual identity for Indonesian rattan furniture.

Kamal's rattan furniture products quickly gained popularity among Indonesia's upper-middle-class consumers and played a pivotal role in driving the development of the modern rattan furniture industry. At design exhibitions, the Kamal Furniture booth consistently attracted significant attention and served as a benchmark for contemporary rattan design. Imam Buchori Zainuddin's innovative work with Kamal Furniture from 1974 to 1985 was widely recognized and frequently emulated by furniture producers in Cirebon. However, these imitations could never fully replicate the quality or construction of the originals. This was largely due to Kamal's use of sophisticated joinery systems and premium materials. High-grade leather, for example, helped set their products apart in both structural integrity and aesthetic appeal. Through his collaboration with Kamal, Zainuddin not only advanced the design vocabulary of rattan furniture but also elevated its market position and perceived value within Indonesian society.

Comparative Design Study

To understand Imam Buchori's role in the modernisation of Indonesian rattan furniture design, it is necessary to analyse his works in relation to Scandinavian furniture. Particular emphasis should be placed on Danish wooden furniture. This comparative study aims to highlight both the similarities and distinctions between Buchori's designs and those of Scandinavian traditions. The most evident divergence is found in the choice of materials and construction methods, which are shaped by the physical properties of the respective materials. Whereas Scandinavian designers predominantly utilise wood and bentwood, Buchori's designs are rooted in the use of rattan.

To elucidate the stylistic parallels between Indonesian and Scandinavian modern furniture design, a comparative analysis is necessary. Examining the work of Imam Buchori Zainuddin alongside that of Danish designers, particularly Hans J. Wegner, proves especially insightful. Wegner's renowned *Peacock Chair* (1947) draws inspiration from the traditional English Windsor chair, reinterpreting its form with a fan of flattened spindles that evoke a peacock's tail. Similarly, Imam Buchori developed his own version of the Windsor chair using rattan, maintaining the fundamental structure while adapting the design to suit the material's characteristics. While both chairs share a common lineage in their basic forms, they differ significantly in material. Wegner's use of solid wood and Buchori's use of rattan required different construction techniques and led to distinct aesthetic and tactile qualities (Fig. 4). This comparison underscores how traditional forms can be recontextualized through local materials. Such

reinterpretation contributes to the evolution of modern furniture design across different cultural landscapes.

Wegner's Peacock Chair made from solid wood like oak or ash,showcases refined Scandinavian joinery with a focus on strength, durability, and visual lightness. Its fan-shaped backrest with flattened spindles references a peacock motif while providing ergonomic support. In contrast, Buchori's chair reimagines the Windsor type in rattan—a flexible, lightweight material. This substitution changes the structural logic: rattan's elasticity allows for curved forms and simpler joinery, likely involving pegs or lashings instead of mortise and tenon.

Wegner's chair is symmetrical and sculptural, reflecting his mastery of ergonomics and human-centered design. Buchori's design is more expressive, with looser curves that evoke Southeast Asian craftsmanship. It offers a reinterpretation rooted in local aesthetics rather than direct imitation. Both chairs show ergonomic awareness, though Wegner's aligns with Western anthropometry. Buchori's version likely reflects local habits, with a slightly lower, more breathable seat suited to the tropical climate.

Wegner worked in a post-war Danish context shaped by modernist ideals and industrial production. Buchori, meanwhile, designed in a

Fig. 4. *Peacock Chair*, by H. J. Wegner, solid wood, 1947 (left). *Windsor Chair*, rattan, by I. Buchori Zainuddin, 1974 (right). ©*1stdibs* & I.B.Z.

formative period of Indonesian modern design. His use of rattan was both cultural and pedagogical challenging colonial design norms by localizing an international form.

The formal and material affinities between Scandinavian and Indonesian modern furniture are also evident in the comparison between Poul Kjærholm's PK15 bentwood chair (1978) and Imam Buchori's Pigeon Chair (1974) (Fig. 5). Both designs appear to be inspired by the iconic Thonet chair. Both bentwood and rattan materials can form elegant, curved lines.

However, rattan is structurally weaker than solid wood and therefore requires additional support in its construction. Kjærholm's PK15 (1978) is crafted from bent solid ash or beech, using industrial precision to form a continuous loop for the arm and backrest. The construction emphasizes purity of form and structural clarity through seamless wood bending and minimal joints.

Buchori's Pigeon Chair mirrors the looping gesture but relies on rattan's natural flexibility. Instead of mechanical precision, it embraces

Fig. 5. *PK 15* by Poul Kjærholm, bentwood, 1978 (left). *Pigeon Chair* by Imam Buchori, rattan, 1974 (right). © *1stdibs*.

handcrafted assembly with pegged or wrapped joints. The seat incorporates woven rattan, adding texture and breathability. Kjærholm's design is minimalist and rational, consistent with Danish modernist ideals. The form is symmetrical and reduced, prioritizing abstraction and geometric clarity. Buchori's chair offers a looser, more organic silhouette. Organic inspiration drawn from natural forms allows furniture designers to create pieces that appear more fluid, natural, and harmoniously shaped[15]. The backrest and arms flow naturally into each other, creating a form that feels both sculptural and vernacular. The curvature reflects Southeast Asian sensibilities rather than strict modernist codes. Kjærholm designed for modern interiors, aligning with an international design discourse centered on refinement and purity. Buchori responded to tropical living needs—his chair is lighter, more ventilated, and easier to produce locally, reflecting a culturally rooted yet modern approach.

The contrast between Børge Mogensen's Spoke-Back Chair (designed in 1945, produced by Fredericia in 1962) and Imam Buchori's Oyster Chair (1977) (Fig. 6) highlights fundamental differences in material use and design adaptation. Mogensen relied on the rigidity of solid wood—typically oak or beech—combined with precise joinery to create a rectilinear, modular frame suited for mass production. The geometric form and evenly spaced spokes reflect Nordic restraint, complemented by upholstered cushions for comfort and ergonomic consistency.

Fig. 6. *Spoke Back Chair* by Morgensen, solid wood, 1945 (Left). *Oyster Chair* by Imam Buchori Zainuddin, rattan, 1977 (right). © *mutual art* & I.B.Z.

In contrast, Buchori worked with steam-bent rattan, a material more flexible but less structurally robust. To address this, he reinforced the frame with rattan s upports across the front and back of the seat and between the legs. Uniquely, he left the backrest exposed without cushions, allowing the material's natural form and texture to remain visible. This decision was both functional and expressive—embracing rattan's aesthetic potential while acknowledging its structural limits. The result is a fluid, shell-like form tailored to hand-crafted, small-scale production.

This comparison illustrates how material constraints can inspire design innovation, prompting regionally grounded reinterpretations of global furniture typologies. Buchori's work exemplifies how modernist principles can be reimagined through local materials and cultural values. As Heskett[16] describes in the notion of "design vernaculars," such adaptations are not mere imitations but original contributions—rooted in deep material knowledge and cultural sensitivity. Buchori's Oyster Chair stands as a modern design

achievement shaped by context, craft, and climate.The transformative impact of Imam Buchori Zainuddin's early work with rattan furniture extended far beyond product development. It became the cornerstone of a design pedagogy that deeply influenced Indonesian design education. As a lecturer at the Faculty of Art and Design, Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB), Buchori began to articulate a philosophy that emphasised the fusion of modern design principles with local material intelligence. He championed rattan not merely as a craft medium associated with traditional utility. Instead, he positioned it as a legitimate material for modern furniture construction, capable of embodying international design values such as functionality, structural clarity, and aesthetic restraint.

Buchori's pedagogical approach placed strong emphasis on material-based thinking. Students were encouraged to understand the intrinsic properties of rattan—its flexibility, tensile limits, and textural qualities. They were taught to develop design solutions that respected those characteristics rather than forcing the material to imitate wood-based constructions. This approach resulted in a generation of designers who embraced material honesty and saw indigenous resources not as limitations, but as sources of innovation.

Beyond the classroom, Buchori's legacy is also embedded in his role as a mentor and collaborator within the Indonesian furniture industry. He actively engaged in design consultancy and participated in government-sponsored training programmes. He also contributed to exhibitions that introduced modern rattan furniture to broader audiences. His collaborations with local craftsmen and national stakeholders helped reframe Indonesian rattan from a mass-market export commodity. It became a refined, high-value product category capable of competing in international design markets.

Buchori's legacy lies in his ability to create a bridge between modernist ideals and vernacular expression—what could be called a "localized modernism." His influence is evident in the continued development of rattan furniture design that respects tradition. At the same time, it embraces modern techniques, forms, and global sensibilities. By integrating design education, cultural identity, and material exploration, Imam Buchori Zainuddin laid the foundation for a uniquely Indonesian modern furniture movement. This movement continues to evolve today.

Conclusion

This study has examined the cultural transmission and reinterpretation of Scandinavian design principles within Indonesia's modern furniture context, with a particular focus on the use of rattan. While the figure of Imam Buchori Zainuddin offers a compelling case study, the broader implication lies in how Indonesian designers have localized global aesthetics through material adaptation and cultural sensitivity. Rather than a simple narrative of stylistic borrowing, this phenomenon reflects a process of creative appropriation, where imported design ideals are critically negotiated and transformed.

From a theoretical standpoint, the research draws on the notion of design vernaculars[17], demonstrating how Indonesian designers do not merely imitate but reinterpret modernist forms through local resources, techniques, and values. Methodologically, the paper blends visual analysis and historical contextualization to trace this evolution, highlighting how the use of rattan served both as a material choice and as a cultural signifier in postcolonial design identity formation.

This process, however, is not without its contradictions. The reliance on Western design paradigms raises important questions about cultural dependency and postcolonial asymmetries. The adaptation of Scandinavian design in Indonesia must be understood within a larger framework of global design flows, where the legacy of colonial influence continues to shape taste, education, and market expectations. The absence of critical discourse on these asymmetric risks perpetuating a one-sided narrative of modernity.

A broader critical reflection also reveals the multi-dimensional forces at play. Politically, national identity-building after independence encouraged a rethinking of design education and cultural production. Economically, increased urban affluence created demand for modern furnishings. Socially, the emergence of a design-conscious middle class enabled new aesthetic preferences to take root. Technologically, access to new tools and techniques facilitated experimentation with rattan forms. Environmentally, rattan itself presents a sustainable alternative to imported timber. Ethically and culturally, the shift towards locally grounded yet globally conversant design practices suggest a desire for postcolonial self-determination through creative agency.

In conclusion, the Indonesian reinterpretation of Scandinavian design—while exemplified by figures like Imam Buchori—represents a wider cultural phenomenon. It reflects not only the ingenuity of local designers but also their engagement with the ethical, political, and cultural dimensions of global design influence. Far from being passive recipients of Western aesthetics, Indonesian designers have carved out a space where tradition and modernity converge—crafting an original and contextually rich design identity.

NOTES

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