

DRAKE  
STUTESMAN

HAT

ORIGINS,  
LANGUAGE,  
STYLE

มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลพระนคร

ห้องสมุดสาขาโชติเวช



202003630

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# INTRODUCTION

*Hats . . . come into being when worn.*

STEPHEN JONES, milliner<sup>1</sup>

*Hat: Origins, Language, Style* looks at how people are affected by hats and how and why hat forms and hat ideas communicate vital information. Hats are an outcome of culture and mirror culture in very detailed ways, and any examination of a specific society must have a conscious feeling for the perspectives of the culture being discussed. As such, this study's focus has tended towards Western headgear. One hat, however, has acted as a tie throughout and is not specifically Western. The magical hat is a constant across history and across the globe. With beginnings in the Palaeolithic era and continuing today, it shows how the 'hat' has always been beloved and considered to be of supernal importance.

Enchanted hats, in worldwide folklore, are known as transformers. They change people into beings who can extend themselves, suddenly, beyond their everyday selves. The magic hat offers uncanny, extraordinary gifts. It gives the wearer powers such as flight and invisibility, ushers a person into new dimensions and secret worlds, exposes mysteries, grants impossible wishes and snatches the wearer from danger. Present since the Great Ice Age, these miraculous hats still abound today. They appear as the magician's top hat, out of which rabbits spring, the *Harry Potter* Sorting Hat, a large, misshapen pointed fedora that cannily guides the psyche to a deeper state of self-understanding, and the divine Hermes' winged hat, once emblematic of the Art Deco movement and which remains a sign of speed and elegance.





Art Deco version of Mercury (the Roman name for Hermes) in his magic hat, 1933, portrayed in bas-relief at the Rockefeller Center in New York.

These three examples have deep roots in the past and yet are active in culture, referenced often, and easily recognized. Why are they so appealing? They remain key, not only to the way in which people relate to clothing but in the way that culture perceives power, because the transformative nature of the hat is a concept so embedded in most cultures and so entrenched in human consciousness that it has never lost relevance. The hat has always been endowed with an ability to impart properties to its wearer and then to be emblematic of what that signifies. How unusual, and far-reaching, this supernatural role is.

As an object, the hat is made from all types of material, synthetic or natural, is flexible or stiff and appears in all sizes ranging from tiny to big, wide to tall. It suits all heads, adorning babies and adults, and can be stunning in its idiosyncrasy (couture hat) or either reassuring (clan hat) or terrifying (helmet) in its

## *Introduction*

uniformity. Enduring as well as ephemeral, it is handed down through generations, as a crown or an embroidered coif would be, or discarded after a few minutes, as a paper party hat is. But the hat is not only a thing that sits on the head. It is a complex signifier of human consciousness, representing intricate meanings about beliefs that underlie politics, philosophy, language, religion and manners as well as meanings around intimate subjects such as sexuality and identity. A hat can also convey innuendo, satire and inside commentary on any of these aspects of the social imagination.

A presence in society for thousands and thousands of years, the hat is the only, or at least the earliest known, garment depicted in the Ice Age, appearing as early as 30,000 BCE. But its importance can be hinted at far earlier through the carved and drawn abstract forms – the circle, triangle and square – that materialize during the early signs of human life, some as old as 700,000 BCE. There is a potential connection between these linear

The square-shaped mortarboard is associated with balance and judgement.







The conical witch's hat.

The matador's montera is shaped to reference the bull's head.



*opposite*

The fourteenth-century European butterfly hennin has two horns, often draped with veils.

The Korean *gat* can be tiered and horned.



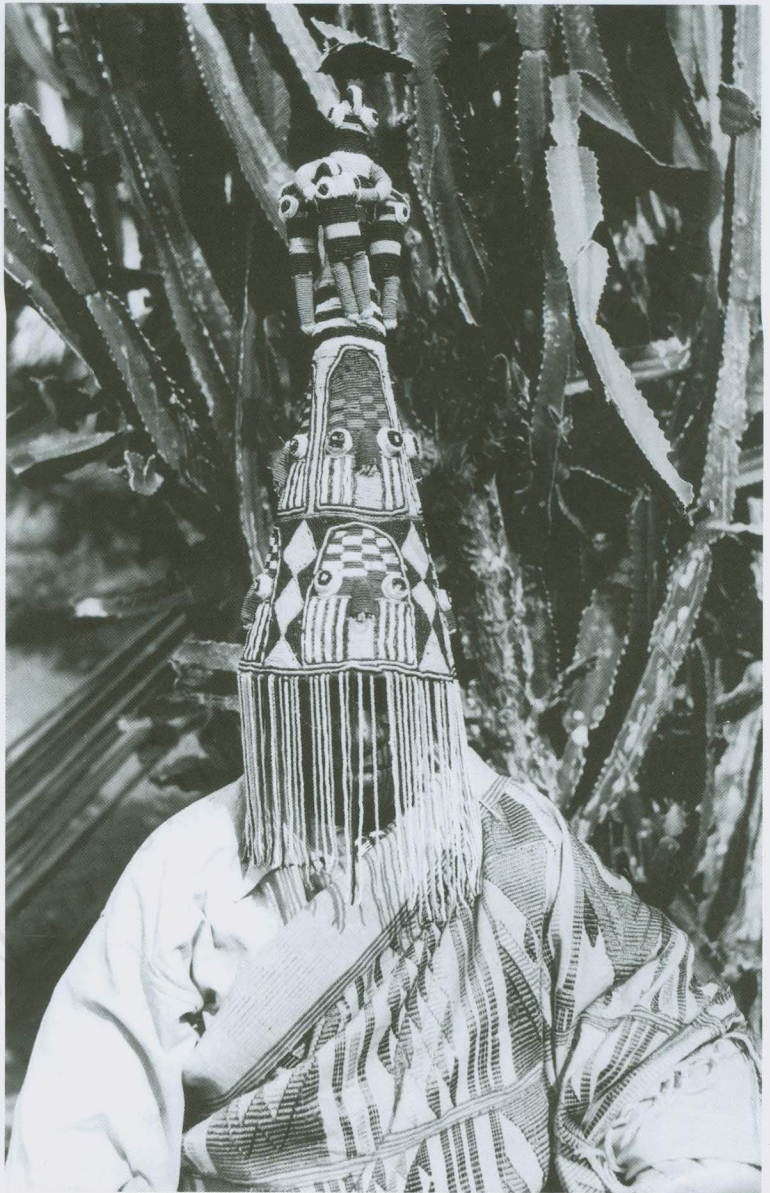


structures and the tangible hat because hat silhouettes, in general, lean towards basic geometric forms. The square scholar's mortar-board, triangular witch's cone, circular skullcap and cylindrical fez are well known. Many hats, across the globe, appear in iterations of their prototypical shapes, often repeating their initial shape for millennia. Most hats develop from these base forms with additions such as a flap, a protrusion or another geometric form. For example, the European medieval jester's hat adds two horn shapes to a conical cap much as the Spanish matador's hat does to a pillbox shape. The Korean *gat* can appear as horned tiers on a similar pillbox form, made in stiff black diaphanous mesh. The dramatic Flemish fifteenth-century butterfly hennin, with two winged wires draped by veils, also bears some resemblance to the horned skullcap. It is arguable that these familiar geometrical millinery foundations have roots in the abstract drawings of the Ice Age, which in turn can represent the gestations of human abstract thinking.

The hat and its recurrent ancient shapes have evolved into a vehicle for such thinking as still today the hat can confer rank and identity as well as protect, transform, bless, sanction and more. The ordinary hat, once placed upon the head, often becomes a version of the magic hat. It too confers powers. It ushers in supernal worlds. It acts with agency. The Nigerian *ade*, the French crown and the Egyptian *pschent*, all merely hats, become the activation of sovereignty when lifted onto a head in a coronation ceremony. The Shinto *tate-eboshi* and Catholic mitre become signs of divine stewardship when worn by a priest, and the Mayan headdress a conduit to the spirit world. The *kufi*, *yarmulke* and *zucchetto*, all skullcaps, designate and express three different faiths when worn, respectively, by Muslim, Jewish and Christian men. The helmet, of any nation, even on its own, can inspire fear.



The Nigerian *ade* is conceived as a crown that connects the king with his community and ancestors. Its strings are meant to obscure the face and thus indicate the king as a leader rather than an individual.



สำหรับ





The crown that French general Napoleon Bonaparte wore for his coronation as emperor in 1804.




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<https://lib.rmutp.ac.th/catalog/BibItem.aspx?BibID=b00107096>



**Hat : Origins, language, style / Drake Stutesman.**

Author	Stutesman, Drake
Published	London, UK : Reaktion Books, Ltd, 2019
Edition	พิมพ์ครั้งที่
Detail	240 p : ill ; 25 ซม
Subject	Hats(+)
ISBN	9781789141368
ประเภทแหล่งที่มา	 Book

" สำหรับเพื่อการศึกษาและอ้างอิงเท่านั้น "