

Utilitarian



This photo was taken in the Mekong Delta. The woman's name is Ahn Au. She works in the floating market selling fruit and other consumables. She is wearing the Asian Conical hat which is extremely common in this area of Asia. While some people in the city may wear a stylish version this hat is made of straw is all about practicality. Its large size shields the face from the strong sun in region. Also, the area is known for rain. As Forrest Gump said about Vietnam, "one day it started raining, and it didn't quit for four months. We been through every kind of rain there is: little bitty stingin` rain and big ol` fat rain; rain that flew in sideways, and sometimes rain even seemed to come straight up from underneath." Because the Vietnamese people tend to be small and this hat is large it is possible for them to stay completely dry just by wearing this hat. It can even be dipped in water and the evaporation will cool the head.



This is Rodger from Kangaroo Island, Australia. Every day of the year, rain, hail or shine he feeds the pelicans of Kingscote. Crowds began to form when he would do this so they could get up and close with the Pelican birds and learn some interesting facts about them. He has a practical reason for wearing a hat, but given the information above it may not be what you think. I uploaded a YouTube video so you can hear for yourself why he wears a hat:

<http://youtu.be/VFdab9pDVwM?t=5m38s>

Style



This is Jerod Hart. He is a music student with the college. Jerod said he chooses to wear a hat “because it fits my personality and sense of style.” He doesn’t know anyone else that wears a hat like his. He said “my friends don’t really wear hat and if they do it is just baseball caps.”



This is Franky Munez. This was the only photo I got off before he noticed and started posing. When I interviewed him he kept running his fingers through his hair. He said he wears his hat “for the ladies.” In case you didn’t notice his shirt says, “I recycle girls.” He said this is his “style” and it was important to him that his outfit coordinated. “The hat for me is the centerpiece because it shows off my hair.”

Status



Although it seems like something you only see in movies high in the Himalayas up the side of a cliff there is a cave where an old lama resides. For the few brave souls that make the climb he will conduct a puja (blessing) on trekkers about to cross the Thorung La (the highest pass in the world). His wardrobe and hat certainly sell the idea that he is vested with the power to confer this sanctification to the weary traveler.



On the Annapurna Circuit in Nepal there are no roads for vehicles. This means goods can only be transported the old-fashioned way. In this case, they are being moved by a mule train. On the way the mule train driver is stopped and is being exhorted for a bribe to pass. The soldier does not get involved in the transaction, but stands back and watches. The man who is “shaking him down” is of the same status as the driver and only has the power to do what he is doing because of the person who is standing behind him. All people in this photo are the same status except for the man in the hat (who also happens to be carrying a gun).

Employment



This is Marsha Fielder who works for Subway restaurant. She wears a hat “because it is part of the uniform of the job.” This is a visor that was designed for a practical purpose of keeping the sun out of someone’s eyes. Since this job is only indoors the hat must serve another purpose. That purpose is to send a clear message to customers that this is an employee and he is here to serve you.



The indigenous people of Cambodia have captured, tamed and worked with wild elephants for 2,000 years. These were used for a variety of purposes including, farming, logging, and warfare. In the ancient Angkor there existed a sophisticated culture with a population of up to one million people. Those in a position of power used elephants to move from place to place. The elephant drivers were required to wear a special uniform. The royalty of the Khmer empire has long since vanished, but the trade still exists as these drivers now transport tourists.

Rituals



This is from a ritual called Inti Raymi (Festival of the Sun). This is an ancient ceremony that was celebrated in Cusco, Peru during the days of the Inca Empire. A Spanish chronicler recorded the event and in the mid-20th century a theatrical representation of the Inti Raymi was started. As you can see from the photo headgear is an important part of the ceremony. I loaded a video I shot of this event on YouTube to see the role that hats play in the ritual.

<http://youtu.be/Yur5nkJFUyg>



These are the women of Thailand celebrating Songkran (Thai new year). Similar to Inti Raymi in Peru the costumes are important to the celebration. The attire of men often signifies strength, bravery, and prowess whereas for women, power is expressed in equally stereotyped forms of seductiveness, fertility, and nurturance. Note the flowers that hang from the hats of the women.

Collective



This is Sammy. In case you didn't notice he is a Texas Rangers fan. He wears his hat as a "sense of pride in the Rangers." He wants others to know he is a fan. Whenever he sees others with this hat on he gives them "the thumbs up." In this way Sammy is part of a collective group larger than himself.



These look like police officers, but they are students studying to become police officers. They are required to dress like this for class, but they often wear the uniform for other days of class. For them this is a sense of pride. This has similarities to employment category, but is different in that these students wanted to wear the uniform. One specifically stated “wearing my hat reminds me I serve a bigger purpose than myself.”