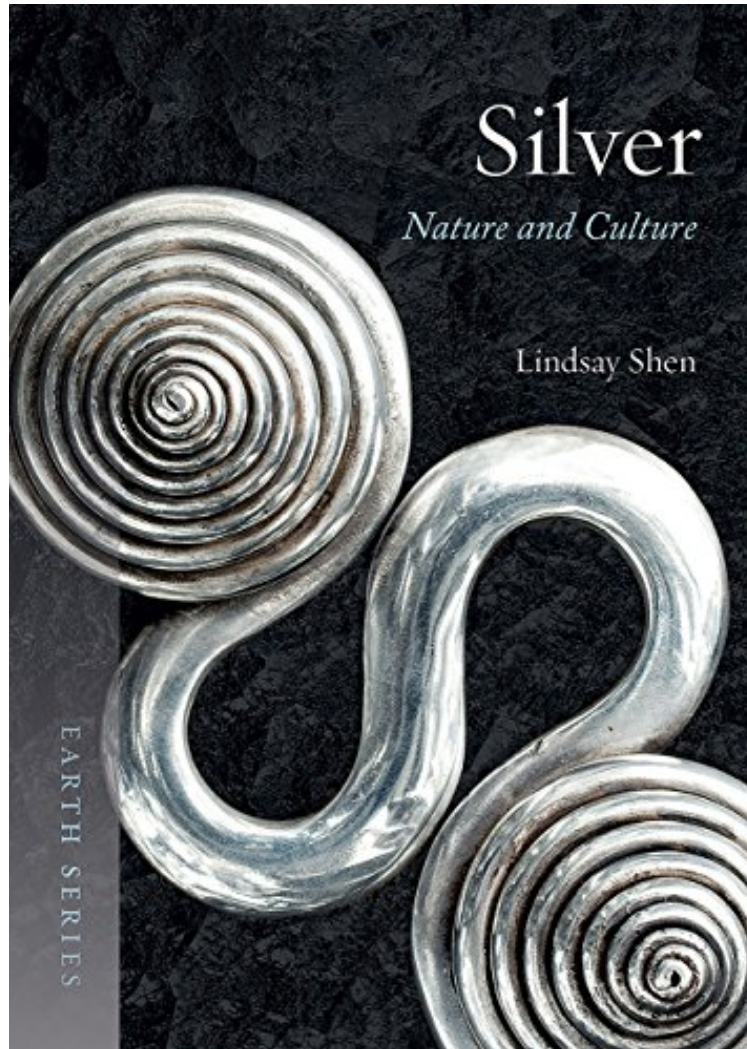


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Silver: Nature and Culture (Earth)

Lindsay Shen

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Lindsay Shen : Silver: Nature and Culture (Earth) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Silver: Nature and Culture (Earth):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. "Silver" - a Book Review By Byron Shen "Silver is a siren. It is the earth's most shiny, reflective metal, spinning light into our eyes like a flipped silver dollar, or drachma, or peso, blinding us to its corruptive potential and hurling men and empires (and vampires) to ruin." – the opening sentence in the book's first chapter "Nature of Silver" And yes, we humans always have had a fondness (or weakness) for things that are shiny and bright. Silver is a precious metal of true antiquity. On a cosmological time scale, the element was forged in the supernovas of giant stars many times larger than our sun, and was then cast down into the crust of our

own Earth. In our human history or culture, Silver was known to us since pre-historic time, and besides being made into beautiful and elegant objects such as jewelry and silverwares, it played a critical role in the rise of Athens, the building of the Roman empire, and the conquest of the New World by the Spanish Conquistadors, etc. Interestingly, we even have a country named after silver, with Argentina taking its name after the Greek/Latin name for Silver, Argentum; and from Argentum, we also have the chemical symbol of Ag in the Periodic Table. In the more modern history, the British Empire waged the Opium Wars against China and forced China to accept opium trade in exchange for the tea trade due to a huge imbalance in the flow of silver as a hard currency – this may serve as an extreme example of the ever-flowing, eons-old global trade gone awry. With atoms that can slide over each other gently and softly, and with the outer shell electrons dancing sinuously and fluidly, silver gives us that softness that a skilled craftsman can master it into beautiful and mesmerizing forms, and silver gives us that dazzling and sensual silvery white sheen. And due to its unique and superior electrical and optical properties, we have also used silver widely in science, technology, and even medicine in the modern era. The book examines the Nature and Culture of Silver in that elegant, classic British style of writing in which you can be captivated by the fascinating story of Silver from its cosmological and geological origin, to its ever-present role in our history and culture, and to its broad applications in technology. And like holding and caressing a beautiful piece of silvery jewelry in your hands, you can feel and relish the words, sentences, and the cadence on your tongue. So, if you look around you and find some silver around you (maybe you have several silver necklaces or bracelets, or maybe you were even born with a “silver spoon”, but hopefully not given “thirty pieces of silver”), and you have one atom of curiosity about silver, you may want to check out “Silver: Nature and Culture”. Even our two boys were impressed that their mom was writing about silver’s apotropaic property to ward off or even kill vampires, monsters and werewolves in the Chapter of “Pure”. And in today’s ever increasing problems with antibiotic resistant bacteria, we are going back to Silver, whether in its ion or nano form, to keep harmful bacteria at bay. The Greek poet Hesiod said the humans have gone through the successive Ages of Gold, Silver, Bronze, and Iron, and today we are in the unique Age of dichotomy and uncertainty, the Age of Electrons and Digits alongside with the Rust Belt. And in the times when some of our famous and powerful chasing after the impetuous and foolhardy gold, whether it is the gold crown or the gold toilet seat, how about we check out that quiet, steady, and elegant Silver every so often?

From spoons to bullets to sterling coins, silver permeates our everyday culture and language. For millennia we’ve used it to buy what we need, adorn our bodies, or trumpet our social status, and likewise it’s been useful to vanquish werewolves, vampires, and even our own smelly socks. This book captures all of these facets of silver and more, telling the fascinating story of one of our most hardworking precious metals. As Lindsay Shen shows, while always valued for its beauty and rarity—used to bolster dowries and pay armies alike—silver today is also exploited for its chemistry and can be found in everything from the clothes we wear to the electronics we use to the medical devices that save our lives. Born in the supernovae of stars and buried deep in the earth, it has been mined by many different societies, traded throughout the world, and been the source of wars and the downfall of empires. It is also a metal of pure reflection, a shining symbol of purity. Featuring many glistening illustrations of silver in nature, art, jewelry, film, advertising, and popular culture, this is a superb overview of a metal both precious and useful, one with a rich and eventful history.

About the Author Lindsay Shen is the Director of Art Collections at Chapman University in California. She is the author of Knowledge is Pleasure.