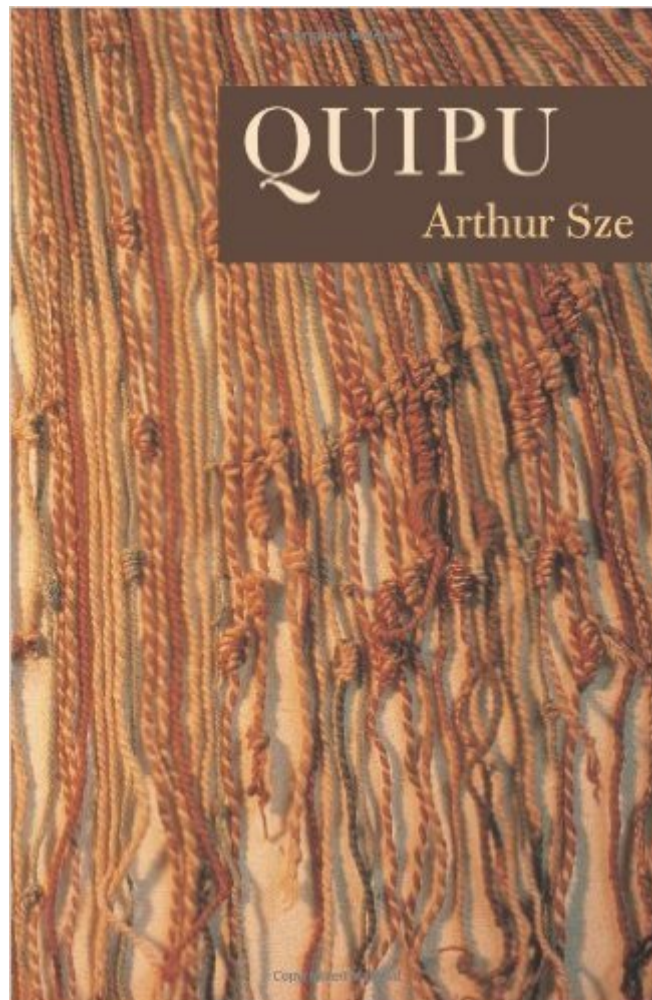


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# Quipu



## Synopsis

Arthur Sze brings together disparate realms of experience—astronomy, botany, anthropology, Taoism—and observes their correspondences with an exuberant attentiveness. The New Yorker Sze's poems seem dazzled and haunted by patterns. The Washington Post Quipu was a tactile recording device for the pre-literate Inca, an assemblage of colored knots on cords. In his eighth collection of poetry, Arthur Sze utilizes quipu as a unifying metaphor, knotting and stringing luminous poems that move across cultures and time, from elegy to ode, to create a precarious splendor. Revelation never comes as a fern uncoiling a frond in mist; it comes when I trip on a root, slap a mosquito on my arm. We go on, but stop when gnats lift into a cloud as we stumble into a bunch of rose apples rotting on the ground. Long admired for his poetic fusions of science, history, and anthropology, in Quipu, Sze's lines and language are taut and mesmerizing, nouns can become verbs—where is passion that orchids the body?—and what appears solid and stable may actually be fluid and volatile. A point of exhaustion can become a point of renewal: it might happen as you observe a magpie on a branch, or when you tug at a knot and discover that a grief disentangles, dissolves into air. Renewal is not possible to a calligrapher who simultaneously draws characters with a brush in each hand; it occurs when the tip of a brush slips yet swerves into flame . . . Arthur Sze is the author of eight books of poetry and a volume of translations. He is the recipient of an Asian American Literary Award, a Lannan Literary Award, and fellowships from the Witter Bynner Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. He teaches at the Institute of American Indian Arts and lives in New Mexico.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Arthur Sze, *Quipu* (Copper Canyon, 2005) I've heard the name Arthur Sze bandied about by folks in the know for a lot of years now, but is one of that vast band of poets whom I'd never actually got round to reading, and decided this was the year. *Quipu* had the best title, so I started there. A fine decision, as it turns out, if an entirely arbitrary one. Sze's palette of interests, obsessions, and symbols is about as wide-reaching as Ezra Pound's, so if you don't have an encyclopedia in your head, you may want to have one handy. Sze does provide some notes at the end of the book, which can be helpful at times, but probably not enough for most folks. Or you can take an alternative approach: just let yourself get lost in the language, and if you still feel like looking up quinoa at the end, go ahead. Those of you who are not cooks and/or watchers of the Food Network will be able to at least get the idea that you're dealing with food, since Sze has his quinoa "simmer[ing] in a pot; the aroma of cilantro/on swordfish; the cusp of spring when you//lean your head on my shoulder." (from the wonderfully titled "The Angle of Reflection Equals the Angle of Incidence") As long as you're satisfied with gathering that quinoa is food, and don't need to go scurrying off to the dictionary, you can sit back and just take in the way the syllables twist, float, and play off one another in that small passage (and the poem whence it comes). It's one of the many gems to be found in this lovely book, which, if you haven't yet read, you should. \*\*\*\*

Great poet; book terribly marked up,

I don't think he remembers me.

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