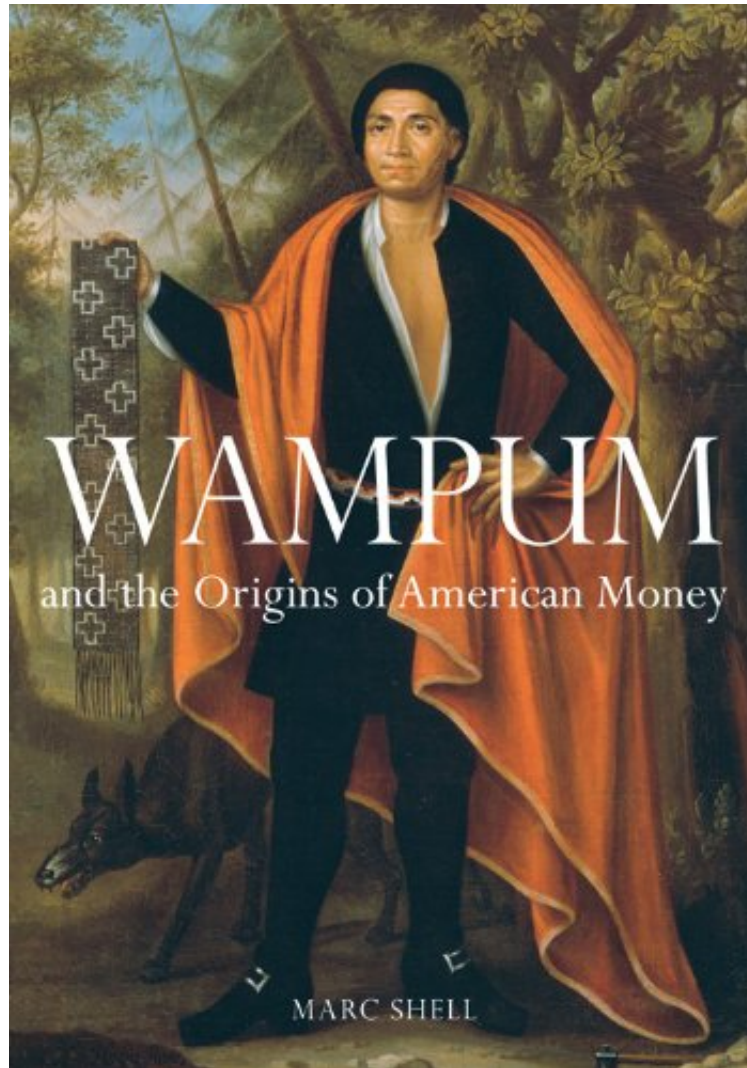


Wampum and the Origins of American Money

Marc Shell

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Marc Shell : Wampum and the Origins of American Money before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Wampum and the Origins of American Money:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An academic rambler...By SophieI'm sometimes asked--as a tour guide at an historic site--what people used for money during the American colonial period. So I've been doing some Web searches and looking for other resources:This book (published in association with the American Numismatic Society) presents a scholarly treatise on the history of "wampum"--right down to the Native American origins of the word, its many cultural uses (beyond supporting trade and economic exchange), and influences on the later "paper wampum" of the colonies (including depictions of Native American peoples/scenes) on banknotes, well into the 19th

century. Well illustrated! Also: plenty of philosophizing and dry musings on sovereignty and coinage around the world; and attitudes toward, and treatment of native American people. About a quarter of the book is reference notes. There's a quality of clutter and rambling to it--that makes the reading of this book (especially, for my purposes!) sort of like poking around someone's roadside antique store: plenty of interesting things to see though not necessarily what you need...and it takes a while to circulate around. Still, you'd trip over things here that you're not likely to, anywhere else. I'd recommend it more for leisure reading (since that's what it would take) while sticking to Web searches for quicker, briefer answers to get, and give.

From Booklist Literature professor Shell provides a scholarly overview of wampum as the lingua franca of the New World. Placing his subject into larger historical context, he examines the ways in which commercial exchanges often mirror the cultural, political, and social evolutions of civilizations. In this specific case, he defines wampum, tracks its history, and uses it as a means to analyze and illuminate this historical transformation. After adopting wampum, European colonials combined it with their own cultural ideas and practices, eventually adapting it into the economic and political currency of North America. By tracing the path of American currency from wampum to Wall Street, he removes wampum from historical-footnote status and spotlights a fascinating, often forgotten, aspect of Americana. -- Margaret Flanagan "Marc Shell provides wide-ranging and interesting observations on money as a medium of communication, translation, and commercial transaction. . . . Building on his valuable work on money and language, Shell shows that, like coins or paper money, wampum had agreed-upon meanings and values that facilitated exchange between individuals and societies."--The Historian