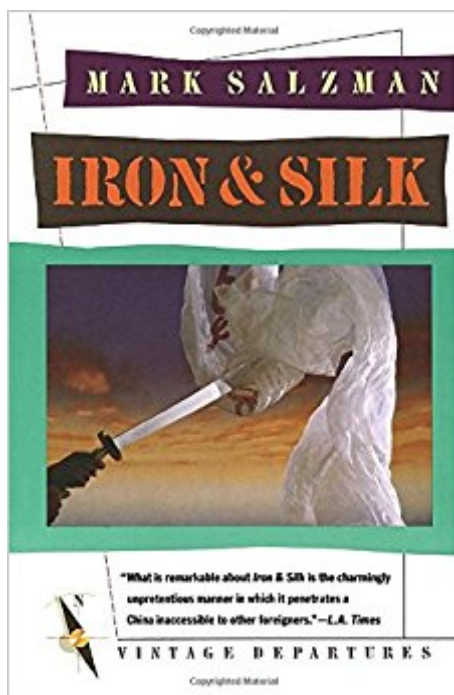


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# Iron And Silk



## Synopsis

Salzman captures post-cultural revolution China through his adventures as a young American English teacher in China and his shifu-tudi (master-student) relationship with China's foremost martial arts teacher.

## Book Information

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General

## Customer Reviews

In 1982, Salzman flew off to teach English in Changsha, China. He writes of bureaucrats, students and Cultural Revolution survivors, stripping none of their complexity and humanity. He's gentle with their idiocies, saving his sharpest barbs for himself (it's his pants that split from zipper to waist whilst demonstrating martial arts in Canton). Though dribs of history and drabs of classical lore seep through, this is mostly a personal tale, noted by the Los Angeles Times for "the charmingly unpretentious manner in which it penetrates a China inaccessible to other foreigners."

YA This anecdotal record of a young man's encounter with the Chinese and their way of life offers unique insights to readers. Salzman had majored in Chinese literature at Yale, and his first job after graduation in 1982 was teaching English to students and teachers at Hunan Medical College in Changsha. He met this considerable challenge with sensitivity, humor, and imagination, and was quickly regarded with respect and affection. Salzman had studied martial arts since he was 13, and he continued his practice in Changsha, where one of China's foremost experts, Pan Qingfu, accepted him as a pupil. Readers will become aware of the many styles of the sport, and,

incidentally, the real meaning of ``kung fu." The personalities encountered range from Salzman's students and teachers to calligraphers, peasants, fishermen, and bureaucrats. Each fascinating episode illuminates the way to a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and character. This book is also notable for its unusually attractive design: the handsome calligraphy on the binding and chapter headings was done by the author. Rita G. Keeler, St. John's School, Houston Copyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

If you traveled, or would like to travel to China and be immersed with its culture, then this book will enhance that travel experience. If your interest for the martial arts is because you appreciate the performing arts, then this book will contribute to that appreciation. And if you ever taught ESL or learned English as a second language, then you will easily relate to the students' struggles and the sometimes amusing irregularities of English grammar, pronunciation and idioms. Iron and Silk is on my list of ten books I would take on a desert island. Salzman's writing style sparkles with enthusiasm and the energy of youth; a feeling of discovery for whatever is newly learned; and a view of everyday life experiences with a feel for adventure, a conversion of the mundane into the extraordinary. Salzman not only mastered wu-shu, but he also mastered the written language that emits sparks on every page. Even his daily meditations reverberate with intensity. This is an ideal book for a young adult who lacks motivation or skills to move onward.

...is must reading for those with an interest in Chinese martial arts and culture. The author describes his journey through China, the people he meets on the way including the legendary Teacher Pan. Quite a bit of the book describes his encounters with ordinary Chinese people and how he comes to appreciate the culture through his experiences. In essence, Salzman learns to see things with Chinese eyes--including his martial arts training in Wushu. I also recommend the pre-quel to this book, "Lost In Place", Salzman's second autobiographical book, before or after this one. The two volumes go well together and provide a fascinating portrait of academic and martial growth. PERFECT for young people who are interested in martial arts as a lifelong pursuit, or anyone with an interest in Chinese culture & living in China to study.

This book is the stuff of legends! 'Iron and Silk' one of a triad of books by Americans teaching in China. As a group, these books together clearly illustrate the blind men and the elephant that is China. The other two books are 'River Town' by Peter Hessler and 'Pretty Woman Spitting' by Leana Adams. During eight years managing foreign teachers in China, the concept of a "Karmic

Magnet" was my only way to account for the wide range of experiences that each teacher encountered. On that basis, Mark Salzman has proven himself to be an extraordinary individual. I can only envy him his enlightenment and his experiences. My only caution would be that the China that Salzman experienced may well be vanishing.

Liked the story from its release. While it details Salzman's experience going from a kung-fu movie lover who learns Mandarin and then heads out on an adventure/experience of a lifetime learning from a wushu master. It also gives light on little cultural differences learned which makes it most memorable.

Mark Salzman operates through a series of vignettes to detail the culture, customs, and friendship he learns through his travels throughout China. In a format like this, it might have been easy to drift into a series of one sided generalizations contrasting American experience with Chinese experiences. Instead Salzman opens himself up to the Chinese experiences and how they clash with the Chinese experiences. With equal parts of light-hearted humor and serious soul searching with patches of sorrow, this American offers the reader this glimpse into a previously unopened window to China. Above all, it's a personal narrative written about piano teachers, fisherman, and martial arts teachers because these are the people of China that exist underneath the surface of the iron man Communist party. It also reads quite quickly, I finished in six or eight hours, so it's ideal for the all day car ride.

I met a classmate of the author while on a plane ride recently. I was talking to the passenger next to me about leaving to teach English in China for a year and he told me that he had a classmate at Yale who wrote a book about that exact experience in the 80's. So on his advice I ordered the book. I read it while on vacation in Japan before getting to China and found it to be a very easy book to read. The "chapters" are broken down to very short segments that allowed me to read while waiting for a train or sitting on one. The book only took me a few days to read because of this and how enjoyable it was. He really did a lot of things and made the most of his time helping to motivate me to hopefully do the same.

Great

Being a martial artist who practice kung and tai chi I appreciate his description and love for the

art. Also having been to China on a kung fu tour I had seen the Chinese training vs American been to place mention in the book etc. Mark describe the Chinese people and place in the same way I experienced it and he loves the culture

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