



Sand and Silicon: Science that Changed the World

Denis McWhan

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This is a story about sand and how science and silicon changed our lives. Over the last century, science taught us how to take this most common material and create the products on which we depend. It allows us to determine the atomic structure of materials and to grow novel, new materials atomic layer by atomic layer. The principles of thermodynamics are used to transform sand into ultra pure silicon. Quantum mechanics gave birth to the electronic age and the computer chip in which dopants are precisely placed in ultra pure silicon. The absorption and emission and reflection of quanta of light, photons, underlies solar cells, light emitting diodes, radiation detectors and optical fibers. This book follows the history of these scientific discoveries and relates them to the products made from sand.



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