

CHINESE FOOTBINDING

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"What is the matter with the child?" asked the doctor.
"Her feet", solemnly replied the father.

Hastily rising and examining these, what was his horror to find that one of them was hanging simply by a thread to the thin, emaciated leg.

"What do you mean", cried the doctor, "by binding the child's feet as tightly as you have done? You have killed her", he continued, "and in a day or two she will be dead! There is no human power that can save her now".

MacGowan (1913) "How England Saved China".



Figure 1

From the collection of Professor Preston Maxwell of Brinkley, Newmarket, England. The plaster cast was made directly from a bound foot and appears here in a small shoe which has obviously had considerable wear. The two were brought from China, and probably date from the 1870's. The small block under the heel is still used to aid walking in women who have had their feet bound, and can be seen in Figures 33 and 34 from Singapore.

" Li Ho Chu ordered his concubine, Yaou, to bind her feet with silk and cause them to appear small, and in the shape of the new moon.

From this, sprung the imitation of every other female."

Morrison (1835) "View of China".



Eden Grove

Band

THE GREAT BRITISH



FIG. 237.—Chinese lady bandaging a foot. (After Choutzé.)

FIGURE 2

"Chinese lady bandaging a foot" (After Choutzé).
Reproduced from "Woman" by Ploss and Bartels by
kind permission of William Heinemann Ltd. of
London. The date of this picture is not
given and no further details are available,
but it is unusual in that it depicts the naked
small foot - something that would never
ordinarily be exposed, except to the mother, and
perhaps later to the husband.

"How much does she cost, and what are her feet like?"

"She says she requires no body money, and though her feet are squeezed, they are not passed letting out."

(Some women hedge with their feet, so that they can be either utterly destroyed, or "let out again" according as to whether it is their fate to become wives or concubines).

Parker (1903) "China past and present".



FIGURE 3

From the collection of Professor Preston Maxwell. Female Chinese aged 9 years with complete loss of both feet due to footbinding. From the region of Peking, approximately 1916. Innumerable cases of this type have been recorded in the literature, and many deaths reported from both gangrene and septicaemia.

"Actually, footbinding was sexual in its nature throughout. Its origin was undoubtedly in the courts of licentious kings; its popularity with men was based on the worship of women's feet and shoes as a love fetish, and on the feminine gait which naturally followed, and its popularity with women was based on their desire to curry men's favour".

Lin Yutang (1936) "My Country and My People".

" Fang Hsien of the Manchu dynasty wrote an entire book devoted to this art, classifying the bound feet into five main divisions, and eighteen types. Moreover, a bound foot should be a) fat, b) soft, and c) elegant; so says Fang. Thin feet are cold and muscular feet are hard. Such feet are incurably vulgar. Hence fat feet are full and smooth to the touch, soft feet are gentle and pleasing to the eye, and elegant feet are refined and beautiful. But fatness does not depend on the flesh, softness does not depend on the binding, and elegance does not depend on the shoes. Moreover, you may judge its fatness and softness by its form, but you may appreciate its elegance only by the eye of the mind".

Wong and Wu (1936) "History of Chinese Medicine".

INTRODUCTION

In the history of mankind, almost every part of the human body has been the object of mutilation. Limbs have been lopped off, skin tattooed, genitalia deformed, and skulls systematically flattened. With the probable exception of cranial deformation, it is likely that the majority of human mutilations are bound up with sexual motives, many of them being clearly associated with rites and ceremonies at the time of puberty. Footbinding is probably no exception; indeed, some authors have insisted that the custom arose as a sexual perversion, and was maintained and preserved for purely sexual reasons.

Almost exclusively, the practice of binding the feet of children in order to make them unnaturally small has been Chinese, and female. To be precise, a few men have bound their feet, but only in obscure circumstances, and the only other people in whom intentional deformation of the feet has been practised are the Kutchin Indians in the interior of Alaska. Even in this case, the references and descriptions are by no means clear, and it is possible that the children's feet were merely crippled by the mother's method of carrying a baby on her back. Otherwise, the custom has been overwhelmingly Chinese, and at various periods before the beginning of the present century, was seen over the whole length and breadth of China, and in almost every social class. Its extent and strength of hold as a custom involving mutilation are probably without comparison in any other field. Any missionary doctor of experience can testify to deaths from footbinding, and disease or gangrene, such as that shown in Figure 3, have been described on numerous occasions. How could such an extraordinary custom come into being, and why did it dominate so many millions of women for such a long period of history? Although more numerous, the explanations of recent years are, in the final assessment, hardly more revealing than the explanations of the day can have been to Du Halde, when in 1736, he wrote: "...one cannot certainly say what is the reason for such an odd custom, for the Chinese themselves do not pretend to be certain ..."

On searching the literature, one cannot escape the impression that the study of footbinding as a social phenomenon has interested Europeans more than it has the Chinese. Detailed descriptions of the custom in European languages came first from the French and English, and the

early radiographs - which were almost certainly obtained and published before photographs of the unbound foot were allowed - came from German authors. German and French writers were the first to draw attention to the sexual significance of the custom, and to emphasise the erotic stimulus of the "exquisite, exciting small foot" to the Chinese male. Times may have changed somewhat amongst the modern Chinese, but there can be little doubt that the small foot has, in the past, held much the same sexual significance for the Chinese as the well-formed breast holds for the European today. This alone, however, as later discussion will show, can hardly have been enough to initiate and sustain the custom. Discussion of footbinding with most Chinese men in Hong Kong and Singapore today tends to fall on disinterested ears, and to draw from them about as much or as little emotion as a discussion in this country on high heels or "wasp waists".

This thesis begins by examining the dates and theories of origin and perpetuation which have been put forward, and proceeds from there to describe the effects of footbinding in all aspects. Detailed reference will be made, with radiographs and photographs, to cases seen in Singapore during the years 1954-56, and in whom there was still marked evidence of footbinding in early life. With the Revolution in 1911, footbinding for the most part stopped in China. In settlements outside, however, the custom probably died later and harder than on the mainland itself, as has frequently happened with so many of the older Chinese customs. In South-east Asia, there are many instances of mothers binding their children's feet after arrival from China, and several of the women described in this present account, who are now in their sixties, had their feet bound in Singapore or in the Federation of Malaya. It cannot have been long before they realised their misfortune, for the custom was going out of date, and these children grew up into a world in which the bound foot was not only unfashionable, but also to some extent ludicrous, and certainly a most serious handicap to the activity and work which the new life demanded.

Of the few women who show evidence of footbinding in Singapore today, the majority are ageing and decrepit, and in ten years from the present time, they will have surely died. It is inconceivable that footbinding will be revived, and with their death will thus disappear the only living evidence of an extraordinary custom. We are seeing the last years of an influence

"more cruel and more relentless", as an English missionary once wrote, "than any which has ever afflicted womankind in any age or in any country in the world".

It is the object of this thesis to describe Chinese footbinding in every available detail.



Eden Grove

Bond

THE SIZE IS INDICATED

DATES AND THEORIES OF ORIGIN

Let it be said at once that both the date of origin of this custom, and the reasons for its coming into being, are largely unknown. In both matters there is quite extraordinary disagreement, often amongst sinologists of great experience and repute. Chinese sources of reference tend to be disappointing, and Fuzier (1862) commented on the conspicuous silence of the Chinese records of state matters on the subject of footbinding. "Les annales", he wrote, "qui depuis un temps immémorial sont tenues de manière à consigner avec une scrupuleuse exactitude tous les événements qui se passent à portée en dehors de l'empire ou à son intérieur sont muettes à cet égard, et les histoires de la Chine, nombreuses et détaillées, n'en parlent pas non plus". In fact this is not altogether true; these annals and histories may have been silent, but there are quite a number of references elsewhere in Chinese, as the following discussion will show.

Dates of Origin

Theories as to date of origin may be broadly divided into two groups. Firstly there are those theories, often embodied in Chinese poetry and mythology, in which the date suggested is very ancient indeed. Secondly, there is a much more likely group in which the date is placed somewhere in the ninth or tenth centuries of the present era. In the Tai Chui Phien by Chang Ting-Ssu of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.), there is a statement that footbinding goes back to a legendary empress of the Shang dynasty, that is to say to about 1500 B.C. It is said that she was a fox spirit, and being unable to transform her animal feet, kept them bound up. Du Halde (1736) states dogmatically that the practice started at about the same time, and he refers to the infamous empress Take, saying that "her feet being small, she bound them tight with fillets, affecting to make that pass for beauty which was really a deformity". Doolittle (1868) varies the spelling of the name, and the reason for concealment, by referring to the empress Tak-ki as having been born with club feet; Jebens (1936), and Lake (1952) both repeat this story, stating that the Empress was born with congenital talipes equino-varus, and that to hide her deformity, she ordered all the other court ladies to bind their feet. Still in the same dynasty, and thus in region of 1500 B.C., Dudgeon (1869) mentions a princess or concubine of the court,

of extraordinary beauty and virtue, who had feet like a bird. She is said to have kept her feet carefully concealed, even from the Emperor, and thus to have set an example to the other court ladies. Giles (1900) in his *Adversaria Sinica*, has much to say about the date of origin of footbinding, and expresses the belief that there are good reasons for believing that the custom originated long before the commonly stated period of the ninth to tenth centuries A.D. He quotes the twenty-fifth century B.C. story of Chiang Yuan stepping into a footprint of "God", conceiving and bearing a son without travail, and whose whole foot "would not even fill the big toe". Giles admits that the translation here does not necessarily point to an unusually small foot, but he is impressed with the number of passages scattered throughout Chinese literature which describe the smallness of women's feet, and Arlington (1920) quotes a number of these in support of a very early date of origin.

Parker (1835) points out that none of the Chinese classics alludes to the custom, and that this is presumptive evidence that it did not exist as early as the time of Confucius (551-479, B.C.). The famous Chinese miscellany *Tsa Shih Pi Hsin* of the Han dynasty, describes the choosing of concubines for the Imperial court, and a part of the text which reads; "the soles of the feet were flat, and the toes were kept close together, being bound round by strong silk bandages, which made them small, after the style of the Imperial Palace", refers to about A.D. 150. Giles quoted this as possibly referring to bound feet, but in fact, (Needham and Wang Ling 1957), he mistranslated the passage concerned, and there is no justification whatever for assuming that this was what the writer intended. The passage seems to have been mistranslated and misquoted by several authors. James Zee Min Lee (1950), for instance, asserts; "the custom was already established in the time of the later Han dynasty, around A.D. 147", but is probably mistaken. Yang Shen (1542) in his *Tan Chhien Tsung Lu*, drew attention to various references in Chinese poetry between the fourth and ninth centuries, some of them suggesting small feet, but by no means clearly indicating the existence of footbinding as a custom.

The Chinese term "chin lien" which means "golden lily" or "golden lotus" has been frequently applied to the bound foot and arose with the story of a famous concubine called Phan Fei, who lived during the Southern Ch'i dynasty (498-501 A.D.). The Emperor, Hsiao Pao-Chuan, (sometimes referred to as the Marquis of Tung-hun) is said to have

been enraptured with her dancing. She was given shoes which had flowers carved on them, and the floor was strewn with gold leaf, so that each step she took left upon the ground the print of a lily. "Every step", exclaimed the delighted Emperor, "blossoms forth a lily!" This story, with many variations in its detail is repeated from book to book, and usually with wrong implications. In fact (Needham 1957) it makes no specific, clear reference to footbinding at all, and merely gave rise to the term "golden lily" which was applied to the bound foot in much later times. MacGowan's account (1913) describes Phan Fei's feet as deformed at the outset; Parker's (1835) that the Emperor ordered his favourite concubine to bandage her feet, with the stamp of a lotus flower placed in the sole of the shoe; while Hughes (1894) implies that her feet were unusually small and beautiful, and that she was accustomed to show their beauty by walking over a platform covered with a crimson cloth, and embroidered with golden lilies. And so the variations continue. Before dismissing the date and story as completely unlikely, as far as the origin of footbinding is concerned, one should perhaps note that Wong and Wu in their "History of Chinese Medicine" (1936) link the story quite clearly with the origin of the custom, and that they are quoting from Chinese texts and characters.

Between the date of this story, and the most likely period of origin, namely the ninth and tenth centuries, there are very few other dates given in the literature, but that quoted in Ploss (1935) is worth noting at this stage in view of the discussion on the sexual psychopathology of the custom which is to follow. It is there stated that Merklingshaus, who was interpreter at the German Legation in Peking, consulted the references, and concluded that footbinding had been introduced by the Emperor Chen-Hon Djon who lived towards A.D. 580, "and was exceedingly lascivious", and wanted to create a new feminine charm in diminutive feet.

We come now, in the matter of date of origin, to the second, larger, and altogether more convincing group in which the custom is believed to have started in either the ninth or tenth centuries of the present era. Thus, Hsu (1955) suggests that it probably began in the later part of the T'ang dynasty (618-906), when a favourite concubine wrapped her feet in white satin in order to make her dances more pleasing. Goodritch (1948) gives A.D. 950 as the likely time, and believes that the custom may have originated from the example of professional dancers, aided by the fact

that the style of shoe in the 10th century called for excessively small feet. Hu Shih (1937), quoted by Miltner in an article in the Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery of that year, seems of the opinion that as early as the ninth century, the feet of singing and dancing girls had already become quite small, though of course not necessarily bound. Two Chinese poets are quoted in this article, Tu Mu (803-852 A.D.) and Han Wo (died 915 A.D.), who gave exact measurements for women entertainers' feet, indicating, according to Miltner, that in half a century the length of the feet had been reduced by almost four centimetres. A little further on he concludes that solo dancers in China were the first to have pointed shoes and sometimes to dance on tip toes, and that from this example gradually came all the subsequent excesses of the bound foot.

Without doubt, the most generally accepted belief concerning the origin of footbinding concerns Yao Niang, the favourite concubine or consort of Li Yu, (variously Le Yuh, or Li hou chu), who was the last emperor of the Southern Thang dynasty, and who flourished somewhere in the middle of the 10th century. Needham (1957) states that Yao was a small and beautiful woman especially skilled at dancing, and that she wrapped her feet with silk from an early age, so that they should be particularly tiny. Many people are said to have imitated this tendency, and it is quite widely believed, not only by Needham, but also by many others (Hughes 1894, Werner 1919, Milne 1916, Morrison 1835), that this is the most likely date and theory of origin. Again in Miltner's article, Hu Shih however has suggested that this date cannot be entertained, for the disturbingly good reason that "such a difficult and cruel practice, started by a court lady in a small kingdom in the Yangtse valley late in the tenth century, could not possibly have become a fairly general fashion by the next century.."

Despite this, the middle of the tenth century still remains the most likely time of origin. Against some of the earlier dates may be mentioned the fact that the Empress of Hsuan Tsung (743-756 A.D.) had ordinary, that is to say, large feet, and that it would be most unlikely that the custom was established all around her at that date. Against its existence before the Five Dynasties period (907-960) is the evidence of Hu Ying-Lin in his Shao Shih Shan Fang (1606) who points out that in all the biographies and official histories which he studied there were many references to customs concerning such things as the ways of doing eyebrows and hair, but never a reference to footbinding.

Werner (1919) has no doubt that it was firmly established in China by 1068-1086, "flourishing in the Sung (960-1276) and Yuan (1277-1367) dynasties", and "much in vogue" in 1280. Fuzier (1862) says that Marco Polo of Venice made no mention whatever of the custom when he visited China in the 13th century, and that the first European to describe the custom was possibly Jean de Mandeville (1322-1355) on his far eastern voyage. Needless to say, neither of these dates necessarily has any significance; many people never think of recording their observations in writing, while others omit what seems obvious or commonplace, and footbinding may well have been seen by foreign travellers in China long before these dates. Stoll (1924) considers that there is nothing remarkable in the absence of comment on footbinding by earlier travellers, "as in their time, women of the better classes throughout the whole of the Chinese empire, with the exception of Peking, were almost invisible to strangers, or at least did not come near enough for the study of this detail to be possible".

In conclusion, we wish to emphasise that the date of origin of footbinding is unknown, but that despite the many different views put forward, the middle of the tenth century stands as the most likely period. This conclusion is inevitably based to a considerable extent on the opinion of experts in the field of Chinese history and social affairs, and without whose help this section could not have been written.

Theories of Origin

"When I reached China over 50 years ago", wrote the Reverend J. MacGowan in 1913, "I found that a custom more cruel and more relentless than any which had ever afflicted womankind in any country or in any age of the world was in full force throughout the length and breadth of this great Empire, and that custom was footbinding".

He was thus referring to about the year 1860, when footbinding had almost certainly been established in China for over eight hundred years. Why indeed had this extraordinary custom ever come into being? How precisely did it start? Why did it "catch on", and why was it maintained so relentlessly by so many millions of people? Unfortunately from the point of view of a scientific account, there is no exact answer to these questions. Much of the answer is bound up with the cultural and

intellectual life of China, and with its long history of civilisation, so that people who have lived, worked and studied in China are on the whole far less surprised and disturbed by the enigma of footbinding than those who have not. It should perhaps be repeated that footbinding as a fashion has been in a class by itself. There is no comparison in the history of world fashions, if indeed that is all that it can be called. The rituals of circumcision, with other mutilations of the sexual organs, together with those of the skin, face, and head have undoubtedly taken their victims, and may on occasion have been seriously disabling, but there is not one of them which can compare with footbinding in the matter of numbers of people affected, in a given country, and above all in the extent of the disability produced.

In considering a date of origin, we have already mentioned various ways in which the custom may have started. A number of authors have suggested that there was in fact no very sudden, dramatic introduction, and that the custom grew, perhaps imperceptibly, out of an admiration for small, dainty feet. Again, as has already been mentioned, it may have arisen in an attempt to copy the pointed shoe of the professional dancer. While it is now clear that there is a world of difference between binding the feet and legs neatly with bandages (or even "puttees") on the one hand, and deforming and cramping the feet of children from an early age on the other, this distinction has not always come out clearly in older texts, and much of the confusion about the date of origin of the custom is related precisely to this point. Arlington (1920) has put forward this aspect with particular effect in an article in the *New China Review*. Clearly, if the term "footbinding", at any rate in its early days, is taken to mean the mere application of bandages to the lower limbs without the production of obvious hard and soft tissue deformities, then it may have had a very early origin indeed, and it could well have taken hundreds of years to arrive at the stage depicted, for instance, in Figures

This sort of theory of origin, based on the idea of a smooth gradation from "foot-neatness" to footbinding, is probably the most charitable of them all, but contrasts markedly with the views of such writers as Lin Yutang (1936) who state that the custom undoubtedly began "in the courts of licentious kings", or with the view already mentioned from Ploss (1935) that the exceedingly lascivious emperor Chen-Hon Djon (A.D. 580) merely wanted to create a new

feminine charm in diminutive feet, and Milne (1857) believed that Li Yü (middle of the tenth century, A.D.) had ordered his concubine Yao Niang to bind her feet "as a passing thought of amusement to better the appearance of a member of his harem".

These few examples typify the broad division which can be made in classifying theories of origin, for on the whole, authorities either regard the custom as being sexual in its nature throughout, or as having no obvious relation to sexual motives at all. Missionaries for the most part have emphasised the cruelty and deformity of the custom, and have not often discussed its origin with any great depth of thought except to repeat the threadbare cliché that footbinding was maintained as a social convenience because it prevented Chinese women roaming about. That it did this is obvious, and the further restricting effects of footbinding will be discussed in a subsequent chapter. To think that the custom was introduced or even maintained for this end alone is quite ridiculous, and the idea receives little attention from authorities who bother to mention it.

Hsu (1955) has no difficulty in accepting the origin of footbinding in the efforts of a concubine to make her dances more pleasing by wrapping her feet in white satin, and proceeds from there to discuss the factors which maintained the custom so widely once it had come into being. "For nearly a thousand years", he says, "the willowy walk and the tiny perfume-spreading slippers of famous beauties enchanted the aristocracy and the literati. The more frivolous took pleasure from drinking wine from cups inserted into the bow-like shoes, and in poetry and prose, writers composed paeans to the custom and its loveliest servitors". In attempting to explain the persistence and popularity of the custom he draws attention to two factors - firstly, the fact that in contrast to the Westerner, the Chinese would find no aesthetic objection in deforming the human body, being largely oblivious to it in the artistic sense, and certainly never sharing the Westerner's view of the naked human body as the highest expression of beauty, and secondly, the basic unwillingness of the Chinese to become involved, in, or to initiate a fight for or against any cause, including footbinding. Surprising as these views may be, they are worthy of note, for they come from the pen of a modern Chinese writer who has clearly thought deeply about the social significance of habits, customs and behaviour patterns among his own people.

Smith brings forward another view in support of the idea that the Chinese character itself had much to do with the ready acceptance and persistence of footbinding. He mentions the great readiness of the Chinese people to endure prolonged suffering in attaining a standard, merely for the sake of appearances. "There is no religious custom peculiar to the Chinese", he says, "which is so utterly opposed to the natural instincts of mankind, and yet which is at the same time so dear to the Chinese, and which would be given up with more reluctance".

Giles (1914) is clearly convinced of the sexual basis of footbinding, and says clearly that the real reason for the custom was to make the thighs large. He quotes Professor MacAlister (presumably in the department of anatomy in Cambridge at that time) as saying that a woman with bound feet, would, in the act of walking increase the size of the thighs, because in addition to supporting the body, there would be an extra strain on the femoral muscles due to the need for preserving equilibrium. The rationale of this argument is far from clear and has been disputed by many subsequent writers, but it appealed strongly to Giles, and accounted better in his opinion for both the mystery surrounding the origin of the custom and its resistance to attempts at imperial prohibition. Figure 25 shows a group of Chinese girls, all of whom have had some degree of footbinding, and it appears in Ploss (1935) for the specific purpose of showing that pelvic development is not remarkable. In fact, the thighs can also be clearly seen in this strangely revealing photograph, and they do not appear to be unusually developed. On the other hand, there is a convincing photograph in Miltner's article (1937) of a middle aged woman standing erect, and with bound feet, in whom the thigh development is very conspicuous, though admittedly accentuated by the wasted and tapering lower parts of the limbs.

The sexual motive has received support from many different writers, but notably in French and German literature. Morache (1864) was convinced of it, when he wrote: "to those who realise the degree of lubricity natural to the Chinese, it is evident that the smallness of the foot excites them, and causes this trend of associations" ("qu'ils attachent une idée de cette nature à la petitesse du pied"). Furthermore, he had been assured that persons exhausted by Opium were in the habit of practising a form of foot and shoe fetishism and obtaining enjoyment by the sight and touch of "tiny and very dainty shoes". Christian converts (Ploss 1935) are said to have confessed in the Roman

Catholic confessional to having immoral thoughts on gazing wantonly at small feet and shoes.

No people today could be more scar- or deformity-conscious than the Chinese, and from missionary accounts this has always been so. They are singularly opposed to amputation if it can be avoided, often giving their reason that they wish to preserve their bodies intact into the next world if at all possible. Dudgeon (1869) commented on this, remarking that it was inconsistent with their ready deformation of the feet.

Stratz (1904) thought it just possible that the success of the Chinese in dwarfing trees might have suggested a similar experiment on women's feet, adding that their love for small feet and dwarfed trees bore witness to the same love for small and elegant, not to say deformed, things. The idea lacks strength, and we have failed to find any other similar reference.

Small wonder that so many authors have given up the search, and concluded that there is in fact no good explanation for the origin of footbinding. As with the cause of disease, the very number of explanations put forward is proof that the cause is not known. As often happens, there is in fact no single cause, but a multiplicity of them, and it is hardly surprising that no conclusion can be reached. Thus, at the other end of the body, Dingwall's work (1931) on "Artificial Cranial Deformation" came to no definite conclusion as to the real motive behind the custom, and the same fate is likely in the case of footbinding. Further light, however, may be shed on this subject in a subsequent chapter when discussing foot and shoe fetishism and symbolism.



FIGURE 4

Case 'A'. Female Chinese of the Hokkien tribe, aged 48 years, Singapore, 1954. Oddly enough, the foot has been shortened by compression in its long axis, but there seems to have been little attempt at flexing the toes under the sole. The owner was not certain if this had been attempted in earlier life or not. If only a moderate degree of footbinding was intended, it was much more usual to concentrate on the toes, as in the deformity in Figure 8 without attempting foreshortening of the foot as shown here. Note the deep groove in the middle of the sole of the foot due to flexion in the medio-tarsal region.



FIGURE 5

Case 'A'. After many years of walking in specially made shoes, both heel and fore part of the foot are in contact with the ground. Walking was stiff and tottery, but quite rapid, and required no aid. There are quite a number of Chinese women in Singapore who wear these specially made shoes, or infants' "gym-shoes" in an attempt to maintain normal walking.

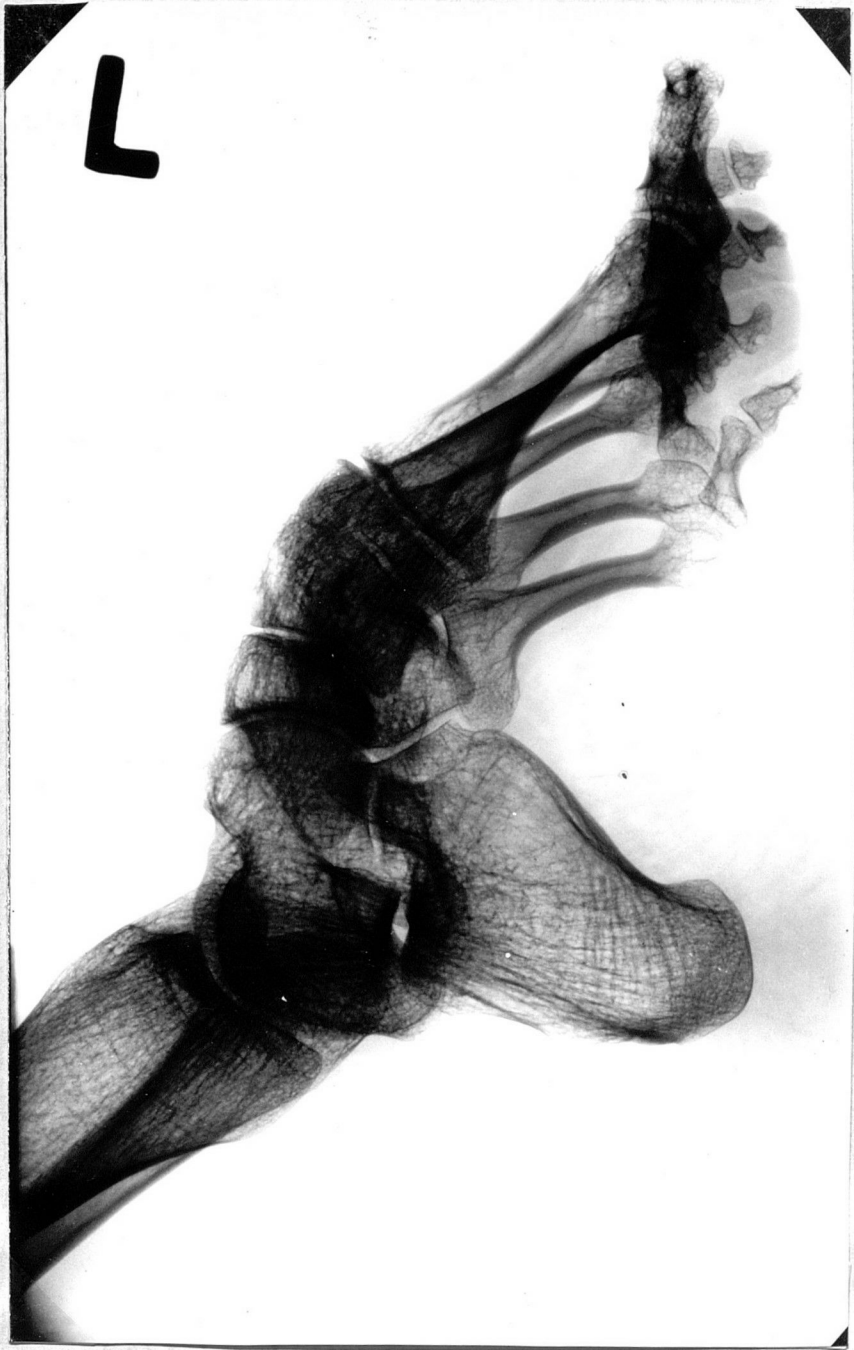


FIGURE 6.

Case 'A'. Lateral radiograph of the foot. Note the tendency to vertical position of the os calcis, with increased plantar arch, bulging of the dorsum, abnormal position of the metatarso-phalangeal joints, and distorted toes.



FIGURE 7.

Case 'A'. Antero-posterior radiograph. There is heel-to-toe shortening with metatarso-valgus deformity, and disuse atrophy of the terminal phalanges. Like many of the accompanying films in this series, there is gross osteoporosis, and this case there is cyst formation in metatarsal heads and phalangeal bases. There is fusion at the bases of metatarsals, most marked in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DEFORMITY

"..... Man's foot is all his own. It is unlike any other foot. It is the most distinctly human part of his whole anatomical make-up. It is a human specialisation, and, whether he is proud of it or not, it is his hall mark, and so long as Man has been Man, and so long as he remains Man, it is by his feet that he will be known from all other members of the animal kingdom."

Professor Frederick Wood Jones (1949).
"Structure and function as seen in the human foot".

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A statement of this kind strikes a curiously false note in a description of footbinding, and reminds one forcefully that the situation is indeed very unusual. Brown (1900) was intrigued by the unique state of affairs presented by the bound foot; "..... the forces necessitating change of function," he wrote, "are so applied as to produce results observed similarly in, and in every respect comparable to, no other condition."

For the most part, alterations in the external appearance of the foot will be described in the chapter dealing with the technique of footbinding, and the present chapter deals mainly with the deformity as seen radiographically - possibly the most revealing method of examination. In 1845, Sir James Y. Simpson described "the bones of a distorted foot of a Chinese woman" in a most interesting and detailed article, and he laid stress on ten main peculiarities of the bones. In forming a general picture of the bone alterations, these are so useful, and apply so well to the material we have examined, that they seem worth quoting at length. He described the bones of the distorted foot as being smaller and less well developed than normal, the foot as being absolutely shorter, and also diminished in breadth, the arch of the sole as increased, the instep as projecting higher than is natural, the os calcis as being vertical in position with absence of the normal projection of the heel, and the toes as being curved downwards and inwards towards the sole of the foot. He also included upward and lateral displacement of the great toe, but this is not commonly seen, and certainly had never been attempted in any of the cases in the present account.

As can be seen in Figures 10 and 12, and less clearly in Figure 18, the four lateral toes are flexed severely under the sole of the foot, and at the same time the metatarsals are brought together as closely as possible so as to "point" the fore part of the foot. Usually later in the development of the deformity, the whole foot was foreshortened from toe to heel to the greatest extent possible, thus producing a deep cleft, with marked flexion at the mediotarsal joints. This can be clearly seen in Figures 4 and 5, but is completely lacking in Figure 8, where the binding has not involved a heel-to-toe shortening process at all.

It is as a result of this latter process that the most important changes take place, and without doubt, it is in the calcaneum that the greatest changes are produced. None of our own radiographs shows the extraordinarily vertical position which may be attained so well as the reproduction from a slide in the possession of Professor Maxwell in Figure 19. The long axis of the bone is almost literally vertical, and in the same long axis as the tibia. In Figure 17, the long axis of the calcaneum makes an angle of about 58° with the horizontal, compared with a normal of about $10^{\circ} - 15^{\circ}$, and several of the other feet show abnormally large angles with the horizontal. The whole weight of the body is thus transmitted rigidly through the talus onto the calcaneum without any distribution to the heads of first or fifth metatarsal. In its abnormally vertical position, the calcaneum loses the articulation of the upper three-quarters of its anterior articular surface with the cuboid, the latter being depressed obliquely forward and downward. The tibia and fibula tend to "slip down" the posterior surface of the calcaneum, and to lose their normal *relation with the talus*. The region of the attachment of the tendo achilles may become the point on which the weight of the body is taken (Miltner 1937), and unusual sclerosis may take place in this area. In contrast to its wasted condition and tapering extremity in paralytic calcaneus, the shape of the bone is remarkably close to normal (Gould and Pyle, 1897).

The talus, scaphoid and cuneiforms form a high arch based on the calcaneus posteriorly and the metatarsal heads anteriorly (Figure 17) and together with the cuboid, the scaphoid and cuneiforms tend to become wedge-shaped. The talus itself changes position and its long axis tends to become horizontal; it may even rise up anteriorly so as to lose its normal articulation with the scaphoid, as can be seen in Figure 19. The scaphoid is considerably altered

in shape, and may take on the profile of a comma (Chippaux, 1950), as seen to some extent in Figures 6 and 13, with flattening of its inferior and external borders. Next to the calcaneum, it may be one of the most severely modified bones in the deformed foot.

The long axis of the cuneiforms, and also the cuboid is altered as can be seen in most of the lateral radiographs in this series, and the cuboid may form a new articulation with the previously inferior, now anterior surface of the calcaneum. In Sir James Y. Simpson's case (1845), he noted that the new articulation had assumed all the characteristics of a normal joint. We have been unable to confirm it by dissection, or closer radiography, but it would seem both from a study of our own radiographs, and those of other publications, that the cuboid and cuneiforms are perhaps the least affected bones in the bound foot. In the metatarsus, the first tends to become vertical, and the others to become wound round it and even under it, with efforts at flexion of the toes under the sole and the compression of the anterior part of the foot into a point. In this way (Figure 19), the long axis of the more lateral of the metatarsals may become parallel with the long axis of the calcaneum. Tapering of the metatarsals is evident in several of the following cases, particularly in Figures 11-18. The deformities in the toes are well shown in Figures 10, 12 and 17. The curious lateral flexion of the fifth toe in Figure 14 is part of the result of attempting to "unbind" the foot, and to give the toes better purchase.

As regards the legs, the muscles below the knee usually show very considerable wasting, and some indication of this can be seen in Figure 27 - even after allowing for the generally thin state of the patient. As has already been mentioned, there is often some "hypertrophy" of the muscles of the thigh, though Miltner (1937) comments that this is probably more apparent than real, and he had obviously given the matter considerable thought, for in six cases he made a complete radiographic study of all the bones of the lower half of the body. Findings were essentially normal, except for some diminution in the circumference of tibia and fibula.

Movement may occur at both tarsal and tarso-metatarsal joints, but to a small degree, and several writers describe the joints as being severely restricted by fibrous ankylosis, with atrophy of the associated small muscles, and replacement by fibrous bands. For a minute account of the anatomical changes in a Chinese bound foot,

there is no finer work in any language than that of the Japanese anatomist, Naoji Ono, in one of the Japanese Journals of Medical Science of 1940, though Chippaux's account (1950) is extraordinarily detailed and informative.

From the physiological point of view, the whole of the fore part of the foot becomes functionally useless, the walk resembling that of a person in whom the fore part of the foot has been amputated on both sides. The normal "rolling" movement of the foot on walking is abolished, ankle movements reduced to a minimum, and the steps taken usually short and stiff, and with singularly little movement visible at the knees if the degree of binding has been severe. The woman in Figures 33 and 34 had extremely small feet, and walked (with help) in this way. In Figures 30 and 31 the feet had been largely "unbound", and the owner was able to stride boisterously about the streets, using both the fore and aft parts of the foot.

It will be apparent that there are great variations in the degree of deformity produced, and that confusing pictures may be obtained from the "unbound" feet now to be seen in such areas as Malaya and Singapore. That this can be accomplished with success is not to be doubted, and we have heard descriptions of the massaging and unbinding on many occasions from the owners of feet rendered "almost normal". Sir James Y. Simpson was impressed with the resemblance of the condition to that of congenital deformity, and thought the bound foot might afford greater hope, in other circumstances, of changing a deformed member into a normal one, as in the different varieties of club foot. Incidentally, there is nothing very new or peculiar to Singapore about the process of unbinding. Many women who bound their feet in China did so for "marriage market", or social reasons, and rapidly set about unbinding them when they achieved matrimony and had to turn to the practical business of looking after husband, house and children.

In the matter of measurement, there has been confusion because of the criteria applied, some authors referring to the post-mortem naked foot, and others to the external measurements of the shoe. In China, and on the living possessor, measurement of the naked foot would have been almost an impossibility; inspection of the unclothed foot was unheard of during the years of footbinding as an established custom, and missionary doctors have often described their predicament in attempting to examine the foot or treat disease in that area. Even in Singapore, where many women walk about the streets with evidence of

footbinding, we encountered a number who refused point blank to allow either radiograph or photograph. Hughes (1894) states that the smallest foot in the museums of the London hospitals is about 5 inches antero-posteriorly, but he adds that some of the "second degree" feet measure $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches (8.2 cms.), and that the smallest measurement of which he could obtain authentic information was that of a Cantonese girl 5 feet 5 inches in height, whose feet measured only $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches (6.3 cms.). With or without bindings or shoe, this is an astonishing measurement, at first reading unbelievable. There can, however, be no doubt whatever that feet of this size were well known. Indeed, making allowance for the backward projection of the heel, the effective space shown in the small shoes in Figure 23 is less than 3 inches. This backward projection obviously allows a certain amount of "cheating", since the heel may rise above, and out of the small shoe for some distance and yet be concealed by the gaiters and long trousers. Sir James Y. Simpson's case measured 5 inches (12.5 cms.) from heel to toe-tip, $1\frac{5}{8}$ inch (4 cms.) in breadth at the metatarso-phalangeal articulation, and $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch (4.4 cms.) for breadth of instep.

Amongst purely radiological studies, that of Brown (1900) is of great interest particularly with regard to the development of spurs and exostoses and of periosteal proliferation due to long continued irritation. He found that the structural beams or rafters were largely disorganised, except for some redistribution for weight-bearing in the long axis of the calcaneum. This is largely in contrast to the work of Perthes (1902), who believed that the structural beams were redistributed in the foot in response to footbinding, in consequence of altered directions of stress. Brown thought that more could be learnt from thin sections of the bones, but we have been unable to trace any work on this aspect. He also suggested that interesting work could be done on studies of the bound foot in the shoe. In fact, there are a number of articles and illustrations with bound feet in varying types of shoe, notably that of Harvey (1923), but none of them is of outstanding interest.

The radiographs which follow are of women in Singapore, mainly in their late sixties, and all taken during the years 1954-6. Figure 19 is from the collection of Professor Maxwell and is the foot of one of his Chinese patients from the Peking area, and of about the year 1916. The specimens in Figures 20 and 21 are from the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, and show a moderately bound foot before and after dissection.



FIGURE 8.

Case 'B'. Female Chinese of the Cantonese tribe; aged 68 years, Singapore, 1954. 'first stage' of footbinding only, with flexion of the toes under the sole. There was singularly little interference with gait, and the owner wore the local type of open slipper. This was the degree of deformity commonly attempted in women of the lower social orders; the pointed forefoot could if necessary be inserted into a small and dainty shoe, thus giving the appearance of a small foot, and the degree of deformity was not such as to interfere with useful activity in later life.



FIGURE 9.

Case 'B'. Lateral radiograph of foot. Note the tapering of the metatarsals, with atrophy and osteoporosis of the phalanges. 'First stage' deformity with no attempt at heel-to-toe shortening. The film also shows very well the marked narrowing between talus, scaphoid and medial cuneiform (i.e., reduction of joint space).



FIGURE 10.

Case 'B'. Antero-posterior radiograph, showing clearly the extreme flexion of the toes under the sole, with tapering of the metatarsals (from base to head), particularly marked and accompanied by abnormal curvature in the fifth.



FIGURE 12.

Case 'C'. Antero-posterior radiograph. Hallux valgus type of deformity with marked flexion of the toes under the foot, particularly in the 4th and 5th. The sesamoid is displaced laterally. Clearly, the appearances in this foot bear some resemblance to those seen in the feet of Western women who have worn under-size, high heeled shoes for a number of years.



FIGURE 13.

Case 'D'. Lateral radiograph of foot. The long axis of the os calcis is at about 50° with the horizontal (normal 10-15°). The metatarsals show marked tapering, and there is spreading of the toes.



FIGURE 14.

Case 'D'. Antero-posterior radiograph of foot. In addition to the changes just described, destructive arthritis in the metatarso-phalangeal joints is now seen clearly. Sesamoids are osteoporotic. There is fusion of the anterior part of the tarsus. The dislocation of the little toe is acquired in adult life and is part of a spreading effect of the toes in an effort to walk normally.



FIGURE 15.

Case 'E'. Lateral radiograph of foot.
Again, metatarsal tapering, and similar changes
to those described in preceding cases.



FIGURE 16.

Case 'E'. Antero-posterior radiograph of foot. Again shows osteoporosis with cyst formation in the heads of metatarsals, and lateral displacement of sesamoid.



FIGURE 17.

Case 'F'. Lateral radiograph of foot. This is possibly the most representative of the series, and shows generalised decalcification, high plantar arch, 'equinus' type of deformity, and considerable change in shape and position of the os calcis, which also shows poor trabecular pattern. The talus shows bowing of its long axis, and there is wedging of the scaphoid and tapering of the metatarsals. These contact prints fail to reproduce it adequately, but original films show abnormally placed lines of stress from the ankle, through the tarsus to the first metatarsal.



FIGURE 18.

Case 'F'. Antero-posterior radiograph of foot. Note hallux valgus deformity, with hyperflexion of the other toes, and dislocation of the metatarsophalangeal joints in 4 and 5. There is a coarsened trabecular pattern in heads and bases of most of the metatarsals, and with the exception of the first, they are probably all shortened. The phalanges are osteoporotic, with thinned shafts and coarse, sparse trabeculae in heads and bases.



FIGURE 19.

From the collection of Professor Preston Maxwell. Lateral radiograph of a bound foot from a patient in the Peking Union Medical College, about 1916. As reproduced here, it is below life size, but this foot had indeed been extremely small, with marked flexion at the metatarsophalangeal joints. The long axis of the lateral metatarsals is almost parallel with the long axis of the os calcis, and the latter is astonishingly near the vertical, and only a few degrees away from the axis of the tibia itself.



FIGURE 20.

From the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh.
A Chinese bound foot, before and after dissection
(with the following figure). The toes have been
flexed under the sole and there has been some
attempt at shortening of the foot in a heel-to-
toe direction.



FIGURE 21.

From the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh.
A Chinese bound foot before and after dissection;
lateral and medial view. Though difficult to see
here, and not necessarily present in a foot of this
size, there may be quite extensive atrophy of the
small muscles and replacement by fibrous bands.
In addition, there may be severe restriction of
tarsal, and metatarsal joints by fibrous ankylosis.

THE TECHNIQUE OF FOOTBINDING

Perhaps the most immediate practical object of binding the foot was to impart an appearance of smallness and daintiness so that it would conform to a prevailing social standard. With varying social class, the degree would vary greatly, so that in the rich aristocratic minority, the process might be started as early as 2 - 3 years and maintained under the constant attention of a professional technician, while in the labouring class, footbinding would be effected by the mother, and possibly not carried beyond the "first degree", in which the lateral four toes were bent inwards and flattened under the sole of the foot. The age of two years is the earliest we have seen recorded for starting the custom; between 5 and 6 was usual, with most authorities quoting limits of 4 - 8 years. After 8 the whole process would become infinitely more difficult. As Fuzier remarks (1862): "..... l'ossification des os du pied, qui n'est complète qu'à quinze ans, permet d'attendre jusqu'à sept à huit ans; mais alors la compression est bien plus douloureuse; ses résultats plus lente, et moins complets". Despite this, there are instances of the process being started in the teens.

The first stage was that of flexing the four outer toes upon the sole of the foot, and binding them there as securely as possible, at the same time compressing the metatarsals together firmly, a process which not infrequently resulted in dislocations of these bones, and occasionally in fracture (Jebens 1936). This was preceded and accompanied by massage and manipulation. The bandages were made of strong cotton, and usually measured 6 feet in length and 3 - 4 inches in breadth; 3 or 4 bandages would be enough for each foot. In wealthier families, the material might be silk or some other expensive material. After application, the child would be encouraged to walk as much as possible in order to assist moulding and the maintenance of circulation. In the early stages, the bandages were often changed daily, so that the feet could be massaged, aired, and perhaps cleaned with Spirits of Sorghum or powdered with Alum. They would then be reapplied with further tension, and the child again encouraged to walk and use the feet. Some accounts mention the use of a tight boot which was used at this stage and laced to about half way up the thigh; this was quite flat and heel-less, and presumably moulded the whole leg and foot into the gradually tapering and pointed extremity which was so much admired. This process of pointing the fore part of the foot and of flexing the toes

under the sole might take anything up to one year, after which the second stage began, with flexion of the foot upon itself at the mediotarsal joints. As has already been mentioned, this stage was never attempted in many cases, since success in the second stage, and the production of a really small foot would preclude the owner from heavy work, running, and possibly even from walking without assistance. Furthermore, if social circumstances changed, it might well prove impossible to "unbind" an extremely small foot, whereas the first degree, with a total length of about 6 inches (15.2 cms.) would be a serviceable foot and could probably be "unbound" to a useful degree.

For this second degree, greater skill and perseverance were required, and manipulation by experienced hands would play a great part. Various devices were used to help the new moulding; a small metal cylinder might be placed beneath the sole of the foot as a kind of fulcrum and a shoe with a thick convex sole is described. The bandages were now applied in a constricting figure-of-eight fashion around the foot and ankle region, and once the shape had been established fairly satisfactorily, the bandages might be sewn tightly together, or replaced or covered by an unyielding tight sock. Many cruel measures were used to attain the desired end, and it has even been said that the feet were encased in iron. We have been unable to find clear reference to this degree of cruelty, though Werner and Spencer (1919) mention a peculiar mutilation practised amongst acrobat families in which the children's feet are encased from birth in an inelastic shoe, so as to maintain shape while completely preventing growth. They further state that two-thirds of the females subjected to this mutilation die under it "though the greatest care is taken of them".

Ideally the whole process should continue for about 10 years, but once produced, the feet had to be kept tightly bandaged well into adult life, if only to avoid the pain of relaxation. By the early teens many girls are said to have taken over the whole business themselves, and to have developed a social pride in the appearance of their feet. A few years later still, and the matter was of the very greatest social importance to them, for on the size of their feet often depended the quality of their marriage; at the height of the fashion in China, all the details of shape and size would be known to the relatives involved in a betrothal, and discussed with great interest between the two families. The importance of having bound feet was immense. Outside the Hakka tribe, and with a few other exceptions (prostitutes, Buddhist nuns, low class labourers), not to have bound feet was a social stigma which few people

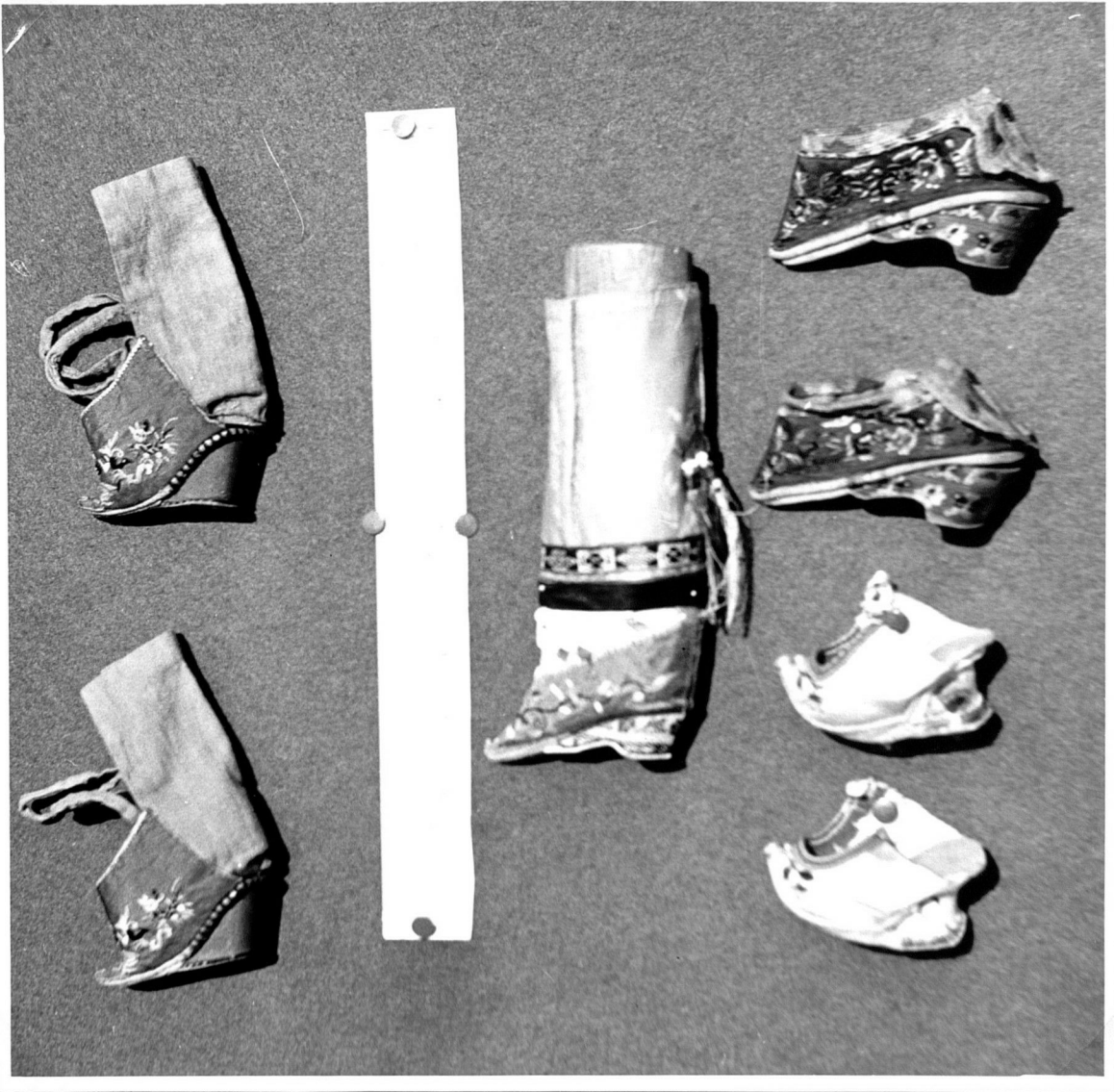
could stand. No doubt the childhood agonies were soon forgotten, and by the time the girl's marriage had been accomplished, she herself would be within a few years of inflicting the fashion on her own children. How could she risk doing otherwise?



Eden Grove

Bands

THE SIZED - 148 08102



FIGURES 22,23,24. It has not been possible to reproduce the plates from the original of the thesis which are all three from the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum and show various types of small shoe.

The above group, however shows several of the points illustrated in the original. The foot-ruler is $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches (3.8 cms) wide. The pair at bottom right are the author's; the remainder from the collection of Mrs E. Culpin, Norwich, and were brought from China in the early part of this century.

HARMFUL RESULTS OF FOOTBINDING

It is beyond doubt that the custom took many lives, and caused much misery and disease. The pathetic child (aged 9) in Figure 3 shows loss of both feet as the result of gangrene, and there are numerous other similar cases on record. Martin (1872) recorded fatal results, Parker (1848) described cases of gangrene of both feet, with separation at the ankle joint, and Gould and Pyle (1897) state that gangrene and ulcerations after removal of bandages were not uncommon, and one or two toes were not infrequently lost. Wong and Wu (1936) go even further; "... as a cause of disease, it may readily be understood that a poorly nourished anaemic foot with deformed bones and abnormal strains is a favourable site for tubercular bone deposits, and tubercular bone disease in bound feet is excessively common. This is, however, the chief pathological evil of the practice. In poorly nourished children and in all cases of injury, there is a very positive tendency to gangrene and death of the part, and amputation is frequently called for".

Some degree of damage occurred to the tissues of almost every woman with bound feet. This may have been purely local, due to pressure or circulatory troubles, or more general, due to effects on the bones and muscles of the legs and pelvis. Many writers (for instance Fuzier, 1862; Harris, 1880; and Dudgeon, 1869) have written of the generally depressing effect of bound feet on the whole personality and behaviour of the Chinese female, and it has even been suggested that the quiet, retiring, self-effacing modest demeanour which has, until recently, been a characteristic of Chinese women, was the result of footbinding. Ulceration gave no cause for alarm, and was in fact greeted by some as a good sign, indicating that the foot was yielding to "treatment". "Lau sian Kiah" was a Chinese saying meaning "ulcer; small foot".

In contrast to these views, it must be stated that many authors have expressed it as their opinion that the custom was far less harmful than has been generally supposed. Maxwell (1929), who spent many years working as a surgeon in China, considered that the custom was more inconvenient than dangerous, and that its evils arose more as the result of limitation to bodily exercise which it imposed, than from local diseases which it produced - "which have been greatly exaggerated". Patrick (1924) pointed out that as a result of their deformity, Chinese

women with bound feet were seldom the victims of serious accident. In 15 years of surgical experience with the Chinese, he could only recall 2 cases which had required amputation of a deformed foot (one of them is in the Pathological Institute of the Royal Infirmary, Glasgow). Dudgeon (1869) said that he had never seen a strong robust woman with bound feet, but that on the other hand, he had never seen any disease in a small foot, or other parts, traceable directly to footbinding. He wondered, however, if this might be more apparent than real, and due to the unwillingness of the owners to come to the doctor for attention.

Melanotic sarcoma has been recorded in a bound foot on several occasions, as well as a variety of other tumours, but there is no reason whatever for supposing that malignancy was more common in bound than in ordinary feet. The specimen shown in Figure 26 was amputated in Singapore by Professor Mekie, and brought to this country quite recently. It is, incidentally unlikely that pressure, either during the process of binding, or as a result of altered posture, has any bearing on the dissemination of malignant melanoma in the foot. Levene (1958) surveyed the distribution of over 500 sole of foot tumours in the Christie Institute in Manchester, and surprisingly found that they were in any case not mainly situated on the weight bearing areas of the sole.

The effect of footbinding on walking depended very much on the size of the foot; if about 6 inches (15.2 cms.), the owner could usually walk fairly well; if 4 inches (10 cms.), walking would certainly be impaired, and running impossible. The woman in Figure 33 was totally unable to walk without the help of her granddaughter, and tended to sway and fall if left without support. The ladies in Figures 28 and 30 can be seen walking strongly, (one of them with a child in her arms) and apart from stiffness in their gait, the movement was remarkably free. Superbly small feet brought with them great disadvantages. Gray (1878) states that it was not unusual to see women with small feet riding along the highroads on the backs of their female attendants, and that when houses caught fire, the female inmates with small feet would often perish from sheer helplessness. Due to loss of elasticity in the gait, the spine was subjected to constant jarring in walking, though references to specific disease in the spine or pelvis have escaped us.

Of the various articles written on the harmful effects of footbinding, that of Maxwell (1916) is probably the most interesting from the clinical point of view. Besides the case of the girl whose photograph appears in Figure 3 he describes 3 other cases. In a girl of about the same age, lumbar and psoas abscesses were opened with a suspicion of tuberculosis, before it was discovered that a bound foot harboured a septic focus; another girl, aged 11 years, was admitted with moist gangrene of both feet, secondary to binding, but died of septicaemic pneumonia before treatment could be effective, and in the last case he describes a malignant growth on the sole eventually producing a mass of glands in the groin.

In the field of personal suffering, there are very few accounts; presumably the agonies of early life were soon forgotten. Hsieh Ping Ying's "Autobiography of a Chinese Girl" (1943) does, however, contain a most poignant description of the thoughts and reflections of a girl undergoing the process of binding. "Alas!" she wrote, "everything had been carefully prepared. A pair of small shoes the sight of which made me shudder, were placed before me when I put my new vermilion shoes on, not only my feet, but also my whole body felt numb and rigid. I felt as if the bones of my feet were broken, and I cried and fell down on the ground. From thenceforth I spent most of my days sitting by the fire spinning. Sometimes I could manage to walk very slowly in the hall my mother had accomplished two of the three things she considered it her duty to do for a daughter - first, to bind her feet, second to pierce her ears, and third to marry her off".

One cannot conclude an account of the effects of footbinding without referring briefly to what have been claimed as "beneficial" effects. It has been stated by some authors that the object of the custom was to increase the development of the pelvic muscles and upper thighs and thus to aid either intercourse, or parturition, or both. In an effort to study this, the extraordinary photograph in Figure 25 appears in Ploss (1935), showing a group of low class Chinese girls, in whom it is stated, there is no obvious increase in pelvic girth, making allowance for the fact that none of them has undergone the second stage of binding. The photograph in our opinion is hardly relevant in this particular context, but is surely of the greatest interest in that it shows a group of young girls, apparently without distress, and completely nude, but still with their feet securely covered. The significance of this foot modesty will be discussed in a later chapter.

Ellis (1905) has it that many intelligent Chinese are of the opinion that the object of footbinding was to promote the development of the sexual parts, and of the thighs, and so to aid both intercourse and parturition, but he adds that there is no ground for believing that the custom had any such influence; "any correlation", he says, "between foot and pelvis is more likely to be congenital". Morache (1864) observed that the mere sight of bound feet had a sexually stimulating effect on many men, and that the process of stunting the feet was supposed, as it were in compensation, to produce marked development of the adipose tissue of the mons veneris, and that strong development of this part, together with that of the labia majora, gave a particular attraction to the woman concerned. Ideas of this kind have never received any scientific backing, and they are probably groundless. They do however allow one to glimpse detailed pattern of sexual interests of the Chinese male, and in Singapore today this interest is still extremely evident. Chinese interest in sex, and particularly in the stimulation of libido, is enormous. Rich merchant dinner parties not infrequently end with each male guest bending to receive an injection of the latest hormone from America. The preparation of aphrodisiac foods is a study of the greatest importance, the fame of swallows' nests being largely founded on this effect - while the purchase of virgins of varied racial origin, usually Chinese, and often in their early teens, can still be arranged for a remarkably small sum of money. There can be no doubt that the Chinese will go to extraordinary lengths in order to prolong sexual potency or to increase the pleasures of intercourse, and to anyone who is familiar with their earnestness in this direction, their notion that the small foot might have an effect on the female pelvis and thus on intercourse is very readily understood. They have in fact "traditionally" associated the small foot with thoughts of this kind, and as will be shown later, attach to it a very considerable sexual significance.





FIGURE 25.

A group of seven Chinese women of the lowest social class photographed in the nude. From 'Woman' by Ploss and Bartels (1935), by permission of Heinemann Ltd. The photograph is referred to in the text when discussing the possible effect of footbinding on the size of the pelvis and on pelvic girth, and it is concluded that there is no obvious increase in pelvic girth as far as this photograph goes. Note that the feet remain carefully clothed, while the girls stand before the photographer, apparently unconcerned, and otherwise quite nude.

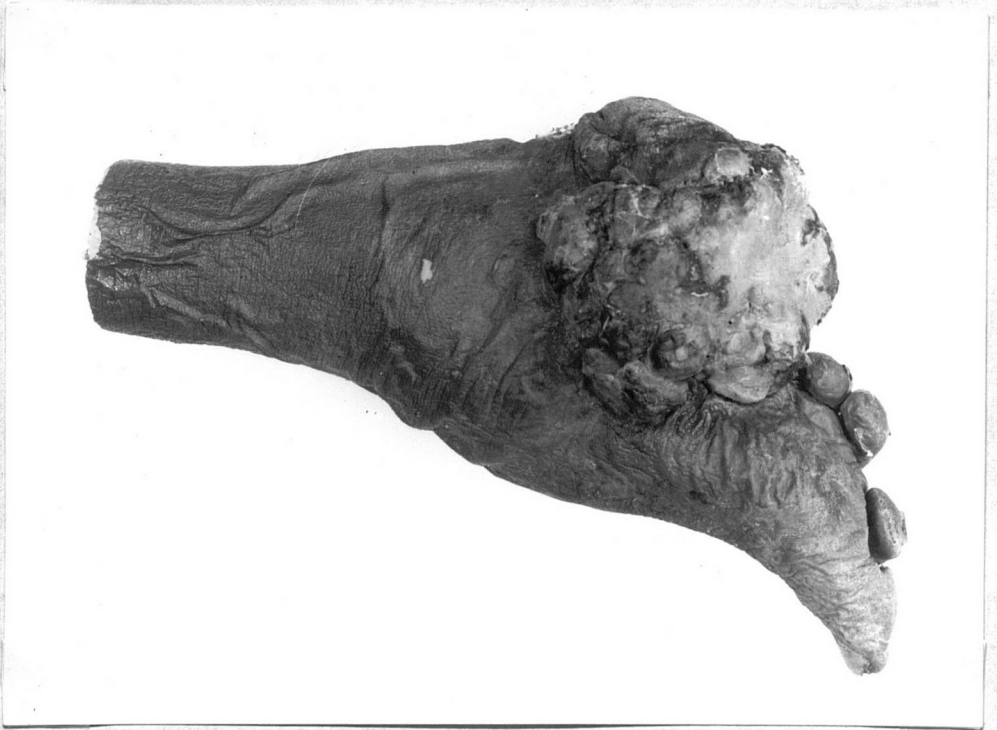


FIGURE 26. From the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh. The specimen was brought from Singapore by Professor Mekie, and shows melanotic sarcoma of the sole of the foot; there were widespread secondaries. Despite statements to the contrary, there is no scientific evidence that cancer, or indeed other pathological conditions, were commoner in bound, than in normal feet.

FOOT AND SHOE FETISHISM AND SYMBOLISM

"The contact of the genital organ with the little foot produces in the male an indescribable degree of voluptuous feeling, and women skilled in love know that to arouse the ardour of their lovers, a better method than all the Chinese aphrodisiacs - including "giusen" and swallows' nests - is to take the penis between their feet. It is not rare to find Chinese Christians accusing themselves at confession of having had "evil thought at looking at a woman's foot." This quotation from Matignon (1898) is but one of many in the literature which refers quite specifically to the sexually exciting effect of the foot. Ellis (1905) regarded the custom as the best known example of "normal foot fetishism", adding that he regarded beauty as being largely a name for sexual attractiveness, and that the energy expended in the effort to make the Chinese woman's foot small was a measure of the sexual attraction which it exerted. As already mentioned in Chapter II, he believed that the custom arose out of the naturally small feet of Chinese women, the result of a tendency in the search for beauty "to accentuate, even by deformation, the racial characteristics". Wong and Wu (1936) testify further to the idea of the small foot as a sexual fetish; "men had come to worship and play with and admire and sing about small feet as a love fetish," they wrote, and again: "the cult of the 'golden lily' belonged undoubtedly to the realm of psychopathology; when one remembers that the really small and well-shaped feet were rare, it is easy to understand how men could be moved by exquisite poetry. Fang Hsien of the Manchu dynasty wrote an entire book devoted to this art"

Fang Hsien's book has proved unobtainable to us, but it is known to have classified bound feet into five main divisions and eighteen types, and a passage of this work is quoted on Page 8 which surely testifies to an extremely sensual view of the custom.

A very great difficulty arises at the outset in any discussion on fetishism in footbinding, and that concerns the meaning of the word fetishism itself. The British Encyclopaedia of Medical Practice defines it as "the substitution for the genitals of unfit objects; corset, shoe, etc.", implying, as do many other definitions that the inanimate object is used in "intercourse" in place of a member of the opposite sex. Furthermore, the word nowadays has a loose connotation in the sense of attaching unusual importance to a thing ("I go to church, but I do not make a fetish of it.").

Before attempting to disentangle the place of fetishism in footbinding, it is profitable to look at some of the earlier associations of the foot and shoe as a symbol. Ellis (1905) points out that the slipper was a very ancient symbol of the woman's sexual parts, and Dufour (1851) that nudity of the foot was a sign of prostitution, "its brilliant whiteness acting as a pimp to attract looks and desires." Hall (1901) states that stroking the feet of others, especially if they are shapely, often becomes almost a passion with young children, and several adults confess "to a survival of the same impulse, which it is an exquisite pleasure to gratify." Of all forms of erotic symbolism, Ellis (1901) gave the most frequent as that which idealises the foot and shoe, and later in the same discourse refers, as has been noted above, to footbinding as the best known example of "normal foot fetishism". A number of authors, notably Marin (1941), have written about Chinese footbinding as if it were a form of fetishism on a national, perhaps unprecedented, scale, and there can be no mistaking their terms, Marin's article for instance being clearly entitled "Footbinding in the Chinese woman and fetishism of the foot".

Despite confusion over the meaning of the word fetishism, there can be no doubt about the association of the custom with sexual ideas; the small foot, and perhaps also the small dainty shoe have played an unusually strong part in Chinese sexual life. Matignon (1898) refers to pornographic engravings, in which a lascivious scene is depicted with the male voluptuously fondling the woman's foot. He adds that when a Celestial takes into his hand a woman's foot, especially if it is very small, the effect upon him is precisely the same as is provoked in the European by the palpation of a young and firm bosom. Morache (1864) referred to foot and shoe fetishism practised by persons exhausted by opium, and Stoll (1924) to the "more or less obscure erotic notions of Chinese men having a possible heightening influence on the development of the custom as a whole. There is in fact evidence to point to a considerably stronger sexual significance for the small foot in the eyes of the Chinese, than has ever been attached either to the foot or possibly to any other part of the body by the westerner. To the Chinese husband, the foot was more important than the face, no one else being allowed to see it naked, except under exceptional circumstances, as for medical examination - and then often with great difficulty. The extraordinary reluctance of Chinese women to expose their feet in public is well shown in Figure 25 where a group of low class girls stand naked for the photographer, apparently undisturbed, but with their feet

still carefully clothed. The prudishness of Chinese women in the matter of their feet has received repeated comment from both missionaries and doctors. "Modesty", concludes Matignon, "is a question of convention; Chinese women have it for their feet."

It is precisely the no-man's-land between the discussion of individual bizarre cases of fetishism on the one hand, and the idea of fetishism affecting an entire nation on the other, which makes a study of this particular aspect of the custom so difficult. Speaking of the subject of foot fetishism in general, Ellis (1905) has described it as "the re-emergence of a pseudo-atavism, or arrest of development of a mental or emotional impulse, which was probably experienced by our forefathers, and is often traceable among young children today," and Jacoby (1901) has regarded shoe fetishism as a true atavism; "the sexual adoration of feminine footgear," he concludes, "perhaps the most enigmatic, and certainly the most singular of degenerative insanities, is thus merely a form of atavism, the return of the degenerate to the very ancient and primitive psychology which we no longer understand, and are no longer capable of feeling." Krafft Ebing (1906) regarded foot and shoe fetishism as being in large measure a more or less latent form of masochism, the foot or shoe being the symbol of subjection and humiliation which the masochist feels in the presence of the beloved object.

What relationship, if any, can be drawn between opinions of this kind, and the elements of fetishism in Chinese footbinding? In support of a very direct and strong relationship, it would be difficult to find a more interesting discussion than that of Marin (1941) in *La Cronica Medica Lima*, in which he sets forth at some length his grounds for believing that the custom is best understood in terms of sexual psychopathology. "We must understand," he says, "that in this instance we are not dealing with a simple literary, aesthetic or superficially social phenomenon. The caprice of an Emperor or a courtesan are not sufficient to unleash a crusade as cruel and absurd as that of footbinding." He traces the origin of fetishes from the primitive stages of man's existence, and then proceeds to discuss the factors which determine the foot or shoe as the object concerned. He quotes Freud as believing that in the choice of the foot as a fetish, there is a strong intrusion of the castration or mutilation complex, and Durand and Nacke (1909) for their belief that there has existed in China at various periods of its cultural and social development, a powerful repression

or inhibition regarding the foot, so that it was regarded with a sort of taboo, and could never be displayed by women, even in bed. Let it be repeated that these discussions appear in an article on "Footbinding in the Chinese woman, and fetishism of the foot", and not in a purely clinical paper on sexual perversion.

One of the most recent, and also possibly one of the most masterly and complete accounts of footbinding in the literature is that of Dr. C. Chippaux (1950) in the Bulletin de la Société des Etudes Indochinoises, and he has a valuable section on the reasons of origin of footbinding, and the place of fetishism and sexual perversion. "The initial reason for this deformation," he says, "is still poorly defined. It is probable that one must look for it in a complex mixture of mythical beliefs, sexual perversions (though not in derogatory sense), and social interests." In that part of his article dealing with the sexual aspects of footbinding, he quotes the theory which likens the imposition of the custom by Chinese men on their women to the use of the chastity belt by Europeans in the Middle Ages. "C'était une forme de l'assurance," he says, "contre certain risques." He adds that the Chinese themselves have never accepted this, and that in any case, Chinese women have never been secluded or restrained and always had every opportunity to leave the house. On the question of fetishism and perversion, he has no doubt that for the Chinese the foot has always been an object of particular attention, "not only in the sexual, but also in the social sphere." He believes that the Chinese have been able to transfer sexuality to one part of the body, namely the foot, and that it may be considered as a "sexual equivalent" together with the shoes, slippers and bandages concerned. He is however emphatic and clear that this transferred sexuality or fetishism of the foot and shoe must not be viewed in a pathological sense, and his whole account lays stress on the fact that Chinese interest in the small foot has never interfered with normal sexual ends.

The truth of the matter is that the subject does not lend itself to scientific analysis, and one deals, somewhat frustratingly, with opinions rather than facts. As Stoll (1908) has said: "the custom of artificial and deliberate stunting of the feet in Chinese women represents one of the most noteworthy and difficult phenomena to explain satisfactorily in the whole subject of the psychology of sexual life." In fact, it is wrong to look for the explanation either mainly or totally in the psychology of sexual life, for Chinese footbinding is concerned with many factors in the poetry, mythology, social customs and history of the country, and one cannot reasonably expect to pin-point a single reason for its origin or persistence, or even to look for the reason in a single aspect of Chinese life.

THE EXTENT OF THE CUSTOM : VARYING TYPES AND AREAS

Adornment, or deformation of the lower limbs has always been commoner in "primitive" as against "civilised" peoples. Certain African tribes cover the leg from knee to ankle with metal rings; Carib women of the West Indian aborigines have constricted the calf artificially, and there are widespread instances of the use of toe and ankle rings. Actual deformation of the shape and size of the foot however, has been seen only in the Chinese and in one other tribe, namely the Kutchin Indians of the interior of Alaska. These people were in the habit of carrying their children in a kind of portable cradle, padded with moss, and fixed securely on to the mother's back. The child sat upright and looked in a direction opposite to that of the mother, with its feet hanging down freely over the edge of the basket seat. The feet were not only covered with warm boots, but also tightly wrapped in bandages, with "the express object - (Stoll 1908) - of hindering growth, as the national conception of beauty demands small feet." Stoll is largely quoting from Richardson, whose original description appears in his "Arctic Searching Expedition" (1851), and the illustrations in the original work do indeed show deformed ugly feet in the adults, at least one of them in a man, and with no mention in the text of the practice being restricted to the female. Richardson's original description concluded: "... short unshapely feet are characteristic of the people. A practice so closely resembling the Chinese one, though not confined, as with them to females, may interest ethnologists." One further point at least of similarity between these people and the Chinese was the wearing of the cue, and it has been suggested that there must have been some contact between the Kutchin Indians and the Chinese, probably through trading.

Ploss (1935) mentions the reference in Pliny to an Asiatic people who had the habit of making women's feet small, and who were called "Struthopedes". In fact, this reference comes from Pliny's Natural History, and quotes Ludoxus to the effect that in the south of India the men have feet 18 inches long, and the women feet so small that they are called "sparrow-footed". Potter (1958: personal communication) states that the context is highly fabulous, and very doubtful indeed as evidence of footbinding.

In China itself, whole areas are said to have remained immune to the custom, and certain groups of women such as those resident in the Sunda Isles, and the boat-women

of Canton, are known never to have been affected. Almost without exception, the curious Hakka tribe, a group which was always scattered fairly widely throughout China, and of wandering disposition, ignored footbinding. Hakka women were described as "moving freely about without shoes or stockings" - a most remarkable situation in view of what has already been said about the feeling of modesty, and the social convention affecting other Chinese women. We never came across, or heard of a Hakka woman in Singapore with evidence of bound feet. Many of the hill tribes in the mainland of China never adopted the custom, and the same is true of the hill tribes in Formosa, although the ordinary Chinese people there probably bound their feet as on the mainland, for Gray (1878) noted that nearly all the women in the Northern provinces had contracted feet, "and the same may be said of the Island of Formosa."

Variations in the type of footbinding have been described for the different areas of China, but they are often conflicting, and the likelihood is that they were due to descriptions of different stages of the same process. There is, however, a suggestion that the south was more energetic and went to greater extremes. Dudgeon (1869) states: "Ladies in the south desire a 3-inch foot; here (in Peking), they are content with 7 inches," and Perthes (1902) described a severe degree of mutilation in the southern parts of China, in which the great toe was sometimes wrenched back over the instep and bound tightly down - as in the case described by Cooper in Chapter III.

Neither Manchus nor Mongols practised foot-binding (Taylor 1958: personal communication), and the Chinese who migrated into Manchuria very largely gave up the custom. The Japanese have never bound their feet (Akiyoshi Suda 1958), nor have the aboriginal peoples of Indo-China, Formosa, Indonesia, Burma or Thailand, and 1958 reports from these latter countries confirm that amongst the Chinese, the bound foot is only seen now in ageing women, and with rapidly decreasing frequency.

Of the actual figures for the extent of the custom throughout China at any time, very little is available, but it is stated (Jebens 1936) that as late as 1929, there were over 91,000 women with bound feet in Peking's total of 518,014 women, i.e. over 20%. This seems a remarkably high percentage both for the year, and the place, for the custom virtually came to an end with the Revolution in 1911, and with the Tartar element so strong in Peking, there had always been something of an influence against the custom,

so that many writers have commented that bound feet were not seen so frequently in Peking as in other parts of the country. Patrick (1924) states that after the Taiping Rebellion of 1850, Chihli, "the province of which Peking is the chief city, together with Kwantung, where Canton is metropolis, and the great western province of Szechuan, in large measure abandoned the practice."



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FOOTBINDING IN MEN

Chinese footbinding, as the term is ordinarily understood, was never applied to boys or men. The possibility of binding amongst male and female Kutchin Indians has already been mentioned, but male Chinese children were never subjected to the custom. While making this broad statement, a few reservations must be made. Thus Arlington (1920) states that footbinding was also practised by men, and refers to the Chinese commentary Pu Tzu-hsia in discussing the matter. Lee (1950), apparently referring to the same source, describes bandages for the feet which were cut on the bias and used to compress the feet and thus achieve a "stately slowness of motion in walking". He concludes: "thus not only women, but even men of the cultured class resorted to binding their feet in order to acquire a gentle and dignified deportment."

Stoll (1908) describes the male Chinese dandy as setting great store by the smallness of his feet, and sleeping with his feet higher than his head, "so that the rush of blood should not enlarge them," and again, as using shoes and boots in which "the toes are forcibly drawn upwards with threads to give the impression of a smaller foot." In an earlier chapter, we have already mentioned the possibility of forceful cramping in acrobat families, and it is also recorded that male Chinese actors have had their feet bandaged when taking a female part in order to give the impression of footbinding.

If any of the above authorities have intended to describe the process of actively deforming the feet of men in order to make them unnaturally small it is in the instance of the acrobat families only that the description comes through clearly. In all the other references, it seems to us that there is much doubt about the meaning of the words used, and that what has been interpreted as footbinding may in fact have merely been the application of "puttees" or bandages to the lower limbs. (Note the right leg of the husband in Figure 2).

With mention of these obscure and doubtful exceptions, the custom may be regarded as exclusively female.

THE SUPPRESSION OF FOOTBINDING

Although one does not hear very much about Chinese efforts to suppress the custom, the Chinese physician Chhê Jo-Shui was one of the first to write against it during the course of a monograph on beri-beri in 1274. He considered it was a disgraceful thing to cause "so much suffering to innocent and guiltless children for a result of which the aesthetic merit was so debatable". (Needham 1958: personal communication).

The Manchus forbade the custom; in 1664, the Emperor K'ang Hsi issued an edict prohibiting footbinding, but this had little effect, and was in any case withdrawn four years later. Two 18th-century Chinese scholars, Li Ju-chen and Yü Cheng-hsieh condemned the custom as monstrous and perverse, but from this time onwards, one hears very little against footbinding until about the 1870's when European missionaries encountered the problem face to face in their schools, and felt the urge to campaign against it. Opinion was divided, some suggesting that the matter was best left to individual choice and conscience, others that a firm ruling was needed. In 1867, a mission school in Hangchow required all girls for whom it provided board and lodging to unbind their feet. This example was soon followed by other schools, but by no means universally, Haberer (1902) reporting that in some Roman Catholic missions, the children's feet were bandaged, "lest in any anti-Christian outbreak, they should be recognised and tortured".

In 1874, the first anti-footbinding society was organised by Chinese women in Amoy under missionary guidance, and in 1895, the "Natural Foot Society" was formed with a certain Mrs. Archibald Little as president. This society sent a petition to the Empress Dowager, who, after a long deliberation, issued an edict in 1902 in which she suggested that footbinding should be discontinued. The wording neither forbade nor condemned the custom, and it has been said that the edict was a mere diplomatic gesture towards the foreign women who had inspired it. There were various other societies formed in the latter part of the 19th century - mostly under missionary stimulus. Their chief opposition related to the social status of not having bound feet, for there had always been a certain association between "large" feet and prostitution, and quite apart from this, the mothers feared that marriage might be impossible

if the children's feet were not bound. Couling (1917) records that the custom disappeared from the South more quickly than from the North "where footbinding was almost universal, slave girls and Buddhist nuns being almost the only exceptions". Certainly the custom disappeared slowly and reluctantly. It was, after all, an old-established institution, and as shown in a previous chapter, had many associations with the sexual life of the Chinese. "The tenacity", wrote Stoll (1908), "with which popular sexual aesthetics cling to the custom of stunting is the result of the power of suggestion exerted on the popular mind. It is this power of suggestion to which women, generally more conservative anyway, are particularly subject, which presents the greatest hindrance to the abolition of the custom".

In 1910, a regulation was passed by the Chinese Ministry of Education, ordering that no girl should be admitted to school dressed in foreign clothes, or with unnatural (i.e. bound) feet. Thereafter it is impossible to say how rapidly the custom declined. The figures already quoted for the percentage of women with bound feet in Peking in 1929 show that it was still much in evidence in adults, but of course they give no indication as to whether or not children's feet were still being bound. Patrick (1924) states: "the custom still goes on", Miltner (1937) and Goodrich (1948) refer to it as "still persisting", and Lang (1946) records that in the late '30s one could still find evidence of the old practice far from the industrial centres. Almost certainly these authors are referring to evidence of footbinding in adults, and not to the continuance of the custom from mother to child. The youngest woman we have personally found in Singapore with evidence of footbinding had a child recently in the Maternity Hospital at the age of 42; thus born in 1916, and perhaps bound in the year 1920. All the other women in the various illustrations of this thesis were considerably older than this, the youngest being 54 years old.

BOUND FEET IN MALAYA AND SINGAPORE

Although a British colony at the time of writing, (1958), Singapore has a strikingly Chinese appearance and atmosphere. In fact, out of its population of about a million and a quarter, 80% is Chinese, while in the Federation of Malaya, the general effect is more "Malayan", and the Chinese form only 38% of the total.

Women with bound feet can be seen almost any day both in Singapore and the towns of the Federation. Some of them, as shown in the accompanying photographs, walk strongly and easily in the streets, while others, like the frail woman in Figure 34 require help and support. On the whole, they are old people, and many have completely lost interest in the appearance of their feet; to some of them, our interest was a source of amazement.

Emigration from China was not legalised until 1866, and it was not until the 1890's that Chinese women started coming to the Straits Settlements in any numbers. Their children became the "Straits-born" settlers, and some of them had their feet bound in Singapore or Malaya. It is not known when the last children were bound, and it has been variously stated that the custom lingered in South East Asia longer than on the mainland of China, or that it died quicker because of the demand for active work and the changing social circumstances. It is our impression that there are many more old people walking about Malaya and Singapore with evidence of footbinding than in either Hong Kong, Kowloon or Macao, and if one may judge from the persistence of Chinese customs in South East Asia compared with the mainland of China, it is likely that footbinding persisted longer outside the mother country.

The following figures show various aspects of footbinding in Malaya and Singapore.

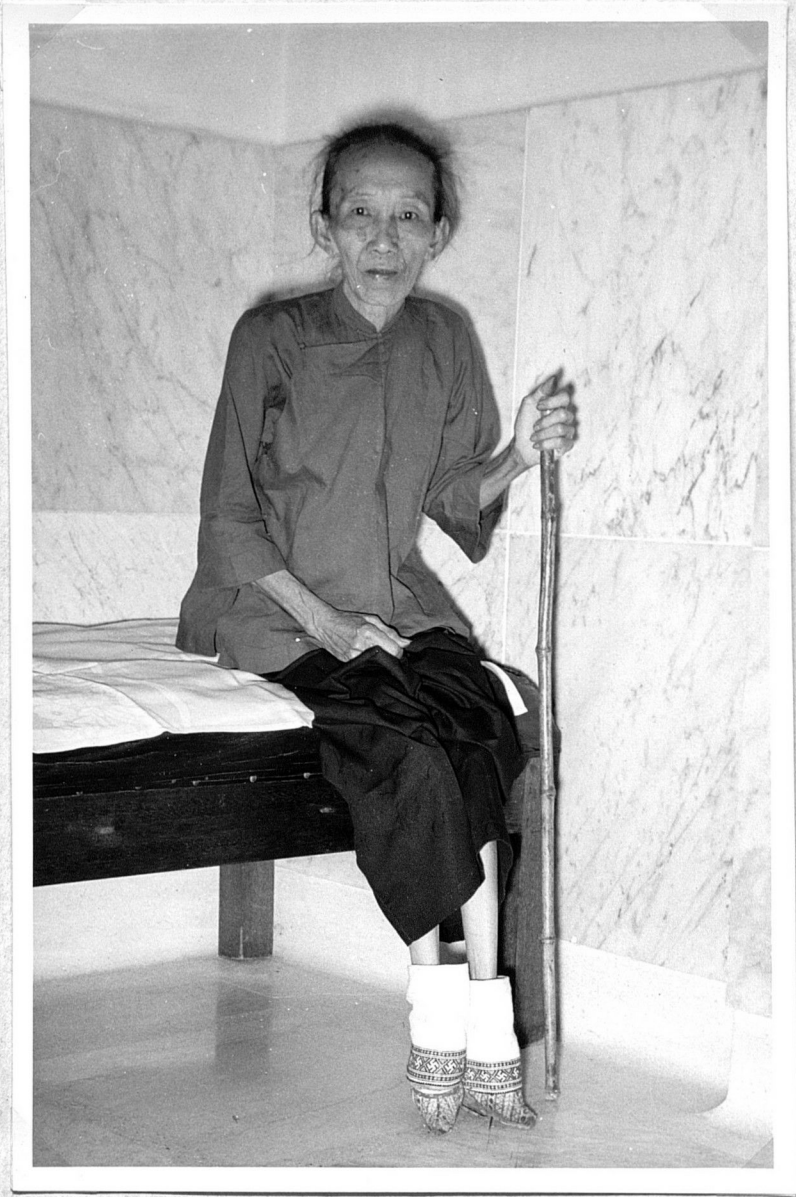


FIGURE 27.

69-year-old Chinese female of the Hokkien tribe, Singapore, 1955. She was completely unable to stand without the aid of her stick. The wasting of the leg muscles is at least partly a general process in this case, since she had active tuberculosis of the chest, but in other cases with good nutrition, wasting of this degree was not infrequently seen confined to the calves. This patient's feet had been bound in China, and her disability throughout life very considerable. Under conditions of hardship, she said that she had on many occasions been more of a hindrance than a help to her family.



FIGURE 28.

On the left, the grandmother with her back to the camera has had her feet bound, but has overcome it to the extent of walking in open slippers and being able to walk about carrying a weight. Most women in Singapore and Malaya who have had their feet bound are not only older than this lady, but also much less active.

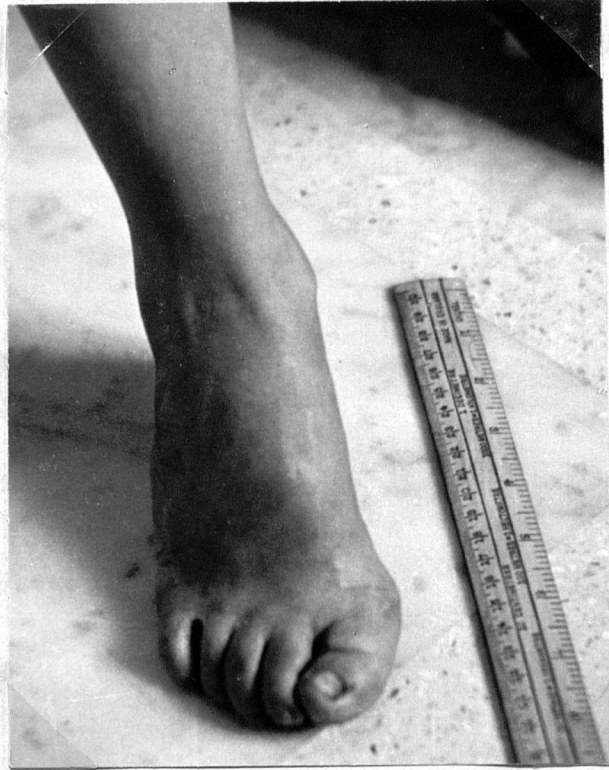


FIGURE 29.

Previously bound foot in a Chinese woman of the Teochew tribe, aged 55, Singapore, 1954. On arrival in Singapore at the age of about 18 years, she and her mother had set about 'unbinding' and flattening the foot as much as possible by massage and manipulation -- with the excellent result shown. It was difficult to know how badly the foot had been deformed at the outset, but the owner stated (without obvious pride) that she had once worn the conventional small pointed shoe.

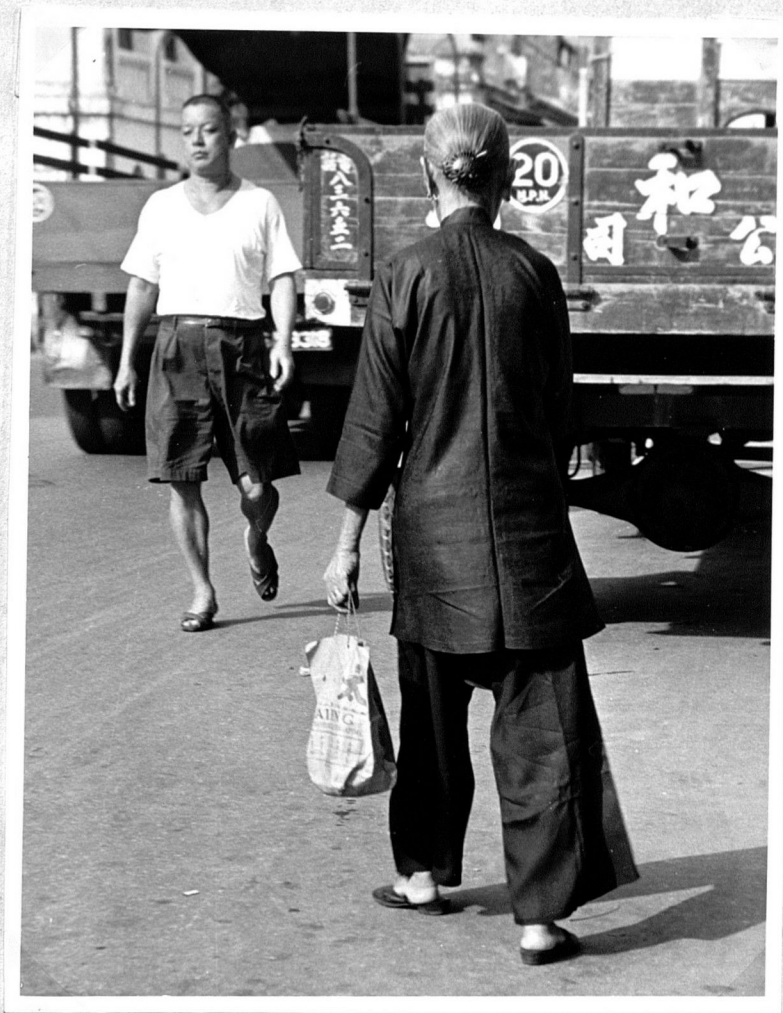


FIGURE 30.

60-year-old Chinese woman of the Cantonese tribe, Singapore, 1954. Feet previously bound; now 'flattened out', and good for quite rapid progress in the local type of open sandal. Gait stiff and awkward, but otherwise unaffected.



FIGURE 31.

Same case as in figure 30. The feet are everted at each step, but the gait singularly little affected.



FIGURE 32.
Small shoes specially made for a woman with bound feet, Singapore, 1955. Her feet had been severely bound in childhood and partly 'let out' in adult life. The shoes are shown contrasted with a standard size match box.



FIGURE 33.

Female Chinese, aged about 58 years, of the Cantonese tribe, Singapore, 1955. Her feet were severely bound and she is now totally unable to walk without support. Small wooden cubes are tied securely under each heel, and she walks on them directly, the fore part of the foot playing no part in the action at all. With these cubes, and the help of her grand-daughter, she was able to walk at a surprising rate -- almost as quickly as a person of her age with normal feet.



FIGURE 34.

Same case as in figure 33.



FIGURE 35.

Small embroidered shoes from Singapore, 1956. The heel-to-toe measurement of these shoes is not more than $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches (8.2 cms), but the owner's heel might easily project well beyond the back of the shoe and be concealed by bandaging or cuff.

SUMMARY

While working in the Clinic of the Royal Singapore Anti-Tuberculosis Association during the years 1954-56, the author encountered a considerable number of Chinese women with evidence of footbinding. It was clear from their age that they represented the last living evidence of the custom, and that in all probability the majority of them would be dead within the next 5-10 years. This prompted a series of notes, photographs and radiographs over a period of about four years, which led to an exhaustive search of the literature on Chinese footbinding in English, French and German. With the help of Chinese and European friends, many Chinese texts were consulted, and as much material as possible examined in various parts of the Far East, and in the museums of this country. The author wishes to emphasise that his own knowledge of Chinese is limited to a few hundred words of one dialect, and that throughout this study he owes much to the help of Chinese scholars in collecting and sifting facts, particularly in historical researches.

Approaching the subject as a human mutilation rather than as an isolated and bizarre fragment of Chinese life, the thesis falls under the following headings - Dates and Theories of Origin, Description of the Deformity, Technique of Footbinding, Harmful Results, Foot and Shoe

Fetishism and Symbolism, Extent of the Custom (varying types and areas), Footbinding in Men, Suppression of Footbinding, Bound Feet in Malaya and Singapore.

Early in the thesis, evidence is brought forward to support the view that footbinding arose in about the tenth century of the present era, but no firm opinion can be formed about the precise reasons for the custom coming into existence, or for its persistence during so many centuries.

The anatomical deformity is described in detail in Chapter III, with particular reference to radiological changes, and in the following chapter deals with the technique employed in producing the bound foot. Under the heading of "Foot and Shoe Fetishism and Symbolism", reference is made to the complex sexual factors concerned, and the belief is expressed that the word "fetishism" should not be applied to Chinese footbinding in the clinical sense of sexual perversion. Brief reference is made to the extent of the custom and its eventual suppression, and to footbinding in men. The thesis closes with an illustrated description of cases seen in Malaya and Singapore.

After an exhaustive survey of the literature, the author believes that the origin, and its "meaning" as a social phenomenon are only to be understood in terms of a wide study of the culture, social habits, history, poetry, mythology, and sexual activities and thoughts of the Chinese

people - and that it is wrong, as has sometimes been attempted in the past, to seek for a single explanation of the custom in one narrow aspect of Chinese life. Almost without doubt for instance, footbinding did not arise solely as the result of a whim of a sexually perverted Emperor, nor did it come into being merely in an attempt to accentuate the naturally small foot of the Chinese female.

While it is possible that the present account brings together a wider range of illustrations and a more complete bibliography than has hitherto been published on the subject of footbinding in general, it has nevertheless been virtually impossible to add anything new to the classic descriptions of the deformity, or to attempt any new explanation of the origin and persistence of the custom. In fact, this is perhaps not altogether surprising, and more experienced researchers might have predicted such a conclusion at the outset. Human mutilations are difficult to analyse and even more difficult to explain, and many other researches on an altogether more detailed plane (such as that of Dr. Dingwall in 1931 on artificial deformation of the head) have been unable to give any clear explanation or "meaning" for the deformity described.

The extent of human mutilations is virtually unlimited; in the various peoples of the world, almost every conceivable part of the body had been altered or deformed - sometimes drastically, and even fatally - in the

name of fashion, sexual ceremony, or social convention. As a mutilation, Chinese footbinding has been remarkable for its extent and persistence, and also for its peculiarly deforming effect by reason of the member selected. With a very few years left before the last evidences of footbinding disappear from the world, this thesis sets out to describe a custom "more cruel and more relentless," as an English missionary once wrote, "than any which has ever afflicted womankind in any age or in any country in the world."



Eden Grove

Book

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(The author wishes to emphasise that these works have not been referred to in the original; they are listed here because they are mentioned in the text, and may be of interest in similar studies from purely Chinese writings).

From Professor Needham, Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge:-

"T'ai Chui Phien" by Chang Ting-Ssu.

Ming Dynasty. A.D. 1368-1643.

The author alleges that the custom of footbinding goes back to the legendary empress of the last ruler of the Shang dynasty (ca. B.C. 1500 - ca. B.C. 1030), who was a fox spirit, and being unable to transform her feet, kept them covered and bound.

"Shuo Lüeh" by Ku Chhi-Yuan.

Ming Dynasty. A.D. 1368-1643.

The author quotes the Han Dynasty book "Tsa Shih Pi Hsin", which described the choosing of concubines for the Imperial Court, about A.D. 150.

"Tao Shan Hsin Wên" : author unknown.

Earlier Northern Sung period: A.D. 960-1126.

This work is quoted in "Mo Chuang Man Lu" by Chang Pang Chi - himself A.D. 1123-1148 - as describing the story of Yao, the favourite concubine of the last ruler of the Southern Thang dynasty.

"Tan Chhien Tsung Lu" by Yang Shen.

A.D. 1542.

Draws attention to a number of references to footbinding in poems from the Six Dynasties period, and from the Tang (i.e. roughly between the 4th and the 9th centuries A.D.).

"Shao Shih Shan Fang Pi Tsung" by Hu Ying-Lin.

1606.

In general, supports the possibility of footbinding arising in mid-10th century.

"Lu Chhing Jih Cha" by Thien I-Hêng.

1579.

The author states that in the reign of Li Tsung, of the Sung Dynasty, A.D. 1225-1264, the girls of the palace bound their feet into very small compass, and that the fashionable term for this derived from the fact that they looked like horses hoofs. The actual term was "Khuai shang ma", meaning quickly mounted horses.

"Nan Shih" (History of the Southern Dynasties).

The history relates that Tung-hun hou (the Marquis of Tung-hun), in other words Hsiao Pao-Chuan (484-502 A.D.), had a particularly famous concubine, whose name was Phan fei. ".... every step produced a golden lotus flower."

"Chiao Chhi Chi" by Chhê Jo-shui.

1274.

An eminent physician, writing a monograph on beri-beri, takes the opportunity to fulminate against footbinding. He states that nobody knows when the practice started, though some think it goes back to Yang kuei fei, the famous concubine of Hsuan Tsung, the Tang emperor of the early part of the 8th century A.D.

From Dr. Birch, The School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London:-

"Ch'ing hua yüan" by Li Ju-chen.

About 1810.

A 19th century romance; a kind of Chinese Gulliver's Travels, in which the author arrives in a certain country, only to find that all the men have their feet bound, and that women are the superior sex. His own feet are bound; he describes the agonies; he is chosen for the Empress' harem.

Strong substratum of sexual inversion.

From "Groups of Sociological Facts" (1919) by Spencer and Werner:-

"Kê Chih Chin Yuan"

The title means - "mirror of scientific and technical origins". Finished in 1735 by Chhen Yuan-Lung, it quotes from "Tai Tsui Pien" with evidence to show that origin of footbinding was not during the Five Dynasties (A.D. 907-960). The work is a valuable source of Chinese references to the dates of origin of footbinding.

From Miltner, L.J. (1937) - "Bound Feet in China" :-

"Kuei Ssu, Lei Kao" by Yu Cheng-hsieh.

First series, Book 13, pages 11 and 18. Published in Hangkow, Chekiang by Hsu Shih, Chen Pi Shan Kuan.

Has a comprehensive discussion on the origin and history of footbinding. Records bound feet in the ladies of the Imperial Household in the eleventh century.

"History of the Tang Dynasty" by Liu Hsu.

Peking Imperial edition of Chien Lung, fourth year of Chien Lung (1739). Also published by commercial press and Chung Hua Book Co., Shanghai.

Gives descriptions of shoes of court ladies, indicating that the small foot and pointed slipper of the dancers of the time had not been adopted by the women of the court or higher families - at any rate, not in the earlier part of the Tang dynasty.



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