

# Unveiling the Hidden Legacy of Chinese Foot Binding: A Journey Through "Bound Feet, Western Dress"



In the tapestry of human history, there have been practices that have both fascinated and horrified generations. One such practice is the centuries-old tradition of foot binding in China, where young girls' feet were brutally deformed to conform to rigid beauty standards. "Bound Feet, Western Dress: A Memoir of Women, War, and the Changing Face of China" by Xinran sheds light on this dark chapter in Chinese history, offering a poignant and deeply moving account of the lives of women who endured this cruel practice.

## The Origins of Foot Binding

Foot binding emerged in China during the Song dynasty (960-1279 AD) as a fashion statement among the elite. The tiny, deformed feet, known as "lotus feet," became a symbol of femininity and desirability. Over time, foot binding spread throughout Chinese society, becoming an integral part of the country's culture and a measure of a woman's worth.



### Bound Feet & Western Dress: A Memoir by Randy Fertel

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 1023 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 245 pages

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## The Agonizing Process

The foot binding process, which typically began at a young age, was both excruciating and irreversible. A girl's toes were forcibly bent under her foot, and her foot was wrapped tightly in cotton bandages. As the bandages were tightened over time, the small bones in the foot would break and reshape, causing immense pain and deformity. Many girls were forced to walk on their toes, and their feet became crippled, often resulting in lifelong disabilities.

## The Hidden Suffering

In "Bound Feet, Western Dress," Xinran delves into the personal stories of women who lived with bound feet. She unveils the physical and psychological torment they endured, the social constraints that prevented them from pursuing their dreams, and the lasting impact of this practice on their lives.

Through their narratives, we witness the resilience of these women, their determination to find joy and purpose amidst their suffering, and the indomitable spirit that allowed them to survive and thrive.

### **The Changing Face of China**

"Bound Feet, Western Dress" also explores the broader social and political context of foot binding. As China underwent tumultuous changes, from the Boxer Rebellion to the rise of communism, the practice of foot binding gradually declined but never fully disappeared.

Xinran traces the evolution of foot binding and its relationship to China's modernization, offering a nuanced understanding of the complexities of Chinese culture and society.

### **Recognition and Healing**

In recent years, there has been a growing movement in China to recognize and address the legacy of foot binding. Survivors of this practice have come forward to share their stories, and museums and memorials have been established to document its impact.

Xinran's book contributes to this important dialogue, shedding light on the hidden pain of women who lived with bound feet and inspiring empathy and understanding.

"Bound Feet, Western Dress" is a powerful and moving testament to the human resilience and the transformative power of storytelling. Through the poignant narratives of women who endured the cruel practice of foot binding, Xinran invites us to confront the dark chapters of our past and to embrace the importance of compassion, forgiveness, and healing.

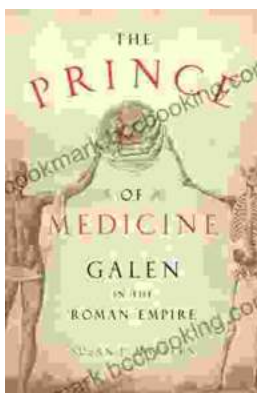
As we delve into the pages of this book, we gain a deeper appreciation for the complexities of Chinese culture, the indomitable spirit of its people, and the enduring legacy of traditions that shaped the lives of countless women.



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