

## Module 4, Discussion 1: Beautiful Feet in China

### Main Topic

Foot binding involved breaking the toes and bones of a young girl's foot and folding them underneath the sole where they would then be bound by bandages into a new form. Fortunately, this was done in many stages over long durations of time, and not just in a single afternoon.

A girl with bound feet was more likely to find a respectful and supportive husband, and not have to marry a man that didn't have lots of money to buy her many nice pairs of shoes. To the husband, these smaller feet were considered attractive and also signified a higher class—two things that are of incredible significance to all men. Another benefit was that a woman with mangled feet could not run away from her husband when he beat her with a stick. Consequently, she was also more likely to stay inside or near the family's house and not spend too much time at the mall when she should be making her husband's dinner and washing his undergarments.

While different cultures have had unique forms of body mutilation to improve a woman's appearance (such as body corsets in ancient Europe), I imagine that most of these fail in comparison to the attainable effects of breaking and folding a woman's foot in half, then having her walk around as a regular person all day long while performing household chores and duties for her husband and family. As far I know, a person does not have to go to the doctor for a broken rib. Apparently, the women in not-so-ancient China did not need to go to the doctor for broken feet (and sometimes gangrene).

### Re: Module 4, Discussion 1 (by Madelyn Brockman)

*One example would be The Karen, aka "The Burmese Giraffe Neck Women" (<http://www.peoplesoftheworld.org/text?people=Karen>) who use bronze rings to deform their clavicle and compress their chest in order to obtain the look of a longer neck.*

Excellent job pointing this out. I remember reading about the customs of these people in another class, but could not remember where it was practiced. This would have to be one of the better cultural comparisons to Chinese foot binding. Although, it seems to me that foot binding would be the more punishing and painful process of the two. Bones are not broken on purpose and then contorted; instead the body grows around and adapts to a figure shaping device. Probably not an enjoyable or comfortable process, though.

### Re: Foot Binding (by Dyana Rodas)

*These beautifying, but basically mutilation processes in other countries makes me glad that we do not practice anything like that here in the United States at this time. But it also makes me wonder if and what American women have done (to this extreme) in the past. I wonder if there is anything comparable?*

I can think of a few, and I'm a guy: weight loss pills, breast augmentation, liposuction, high heels, makeup, waxing, sun tanning, unhealthy dieting programs (leading to eating disorders), acne medications, artificial nails, etc.

I'm sure there are a lot of things I am forgetting, but a women is still expected (or maybe required) to spend a considerable amount of time fussing about her appearance and being self conscious. Sometimes this leads to some rather drastic decisions, but our society accepts these things as normal, on the whole.