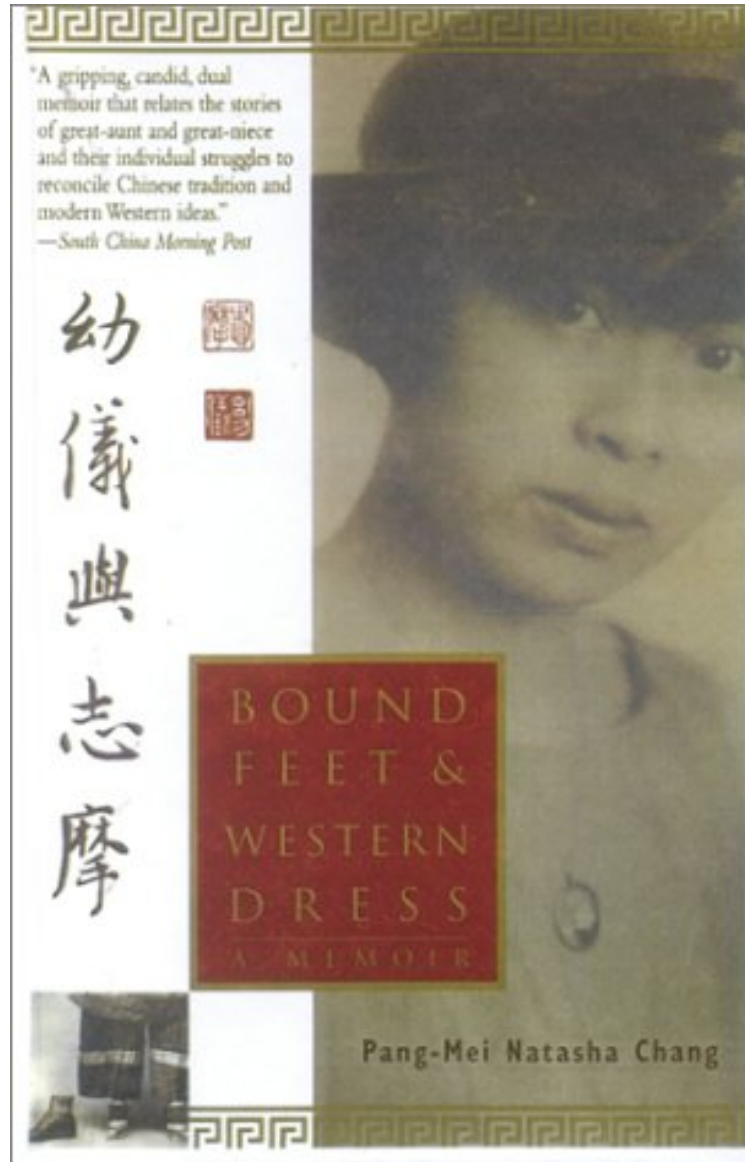


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## Bound Feet Western Dress

*Pang-Mei Natasha Chang*

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**Pang-Mei Natasha Chang : Bound Feet Western Dress** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Bound Feet Western Dress:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. it is told in the first person and as the names are Chinese (so I am not familiar with them) it is easy to start wondering if thBy painter An extremely informative and interesting story. Engagingly written however I found myself often confused as the writer is telling the story from two people's points of view...the person it happened to and the girl who is writing the story of her relative. The problem is that no matter who

is "speaking" in the book, it is told in the first person and as the names are Chinese (so I am not familiar with them) it is easy to start wondering if the young girl is speaking about her thoughts on the old aunt or if it is the old aunt speaking about herself as a young girl. Nevertheless an excellent read which I couldn't put down. Very interesting cultural, historical content and a very sad story as is the case so often with modern women living within ancient cultures. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Two Chinese women face the West at different times. By Kevin M Quigg The author and her great aunt are the main characters in this book about the Westernization of Chinese women. Women in China (as in the Middle East) are second rate citizens. Chinese women have a medieval system of allegiance to the men in the family. This caused the great aunt much trouble as she sees her husband cheating on her, and then ultimately divorces her while she was pregnant. Her loyalty is still to the ex-husband's family, since she is still officially a member of that. Both women ultimately had to establish their own identity before they could go out and confront the world. I liked the read of this book, and finished it the same day I started it. It is a good human interest story about the westernization of a Chinese woman. It shows the difficult emotional journey from the ancient east to the modern west. 20 of 20 people found the following review helpful. Top-Hats, Half-Moons, and the Painful Glimpse of Change By That Umbrella Guy Change can be a frightening affair, and looking back at change can be something that seems almost alien when beheld in the light of certain convictions. That seems to encapsulate the whole of the experience that Chang Yu-I talks about as she tries to explain something of who she is to her granddaughter, Pang-Mei, and it is one of the things that seemed to haunt me as a reader as I listened to Yu-I's tale. The chapters switch from Yu-I to Pang-Mei to give you an idea of how things have changed and to try to identify one person with the other, and I have to say that I found myself glued to the pages and not able to stop reading this book. At first I simply thought it was a story about a granddaughter wanting to explore her grandmother's life because she was the first person to have a Western-style divorce in China, and maybe that was her reason beginning the book. Still, the book goes well beyond that and touches on the dynamics of change and strength and how strong a person can be even when they think they are at their weakest. Honestly, I thought I could vicariously feel my heart cracking under the weight of some of Yu-I's confessions, amazed by some of the things she was able to tell her granddaughter. One of the best things about this tale is the detail that Yu-I goes into about China, and about the way things were seen in the past versus the way things became seen as war loomed on the horizon. Yu-I gives a great amount of detail about what it was like to be a child in a country like China, and she vividly recollects what it's like to have one's feet bound and the reasons why this practice took place. All that breaking and rebreaking, the tying of the big toe over and over again; when I read this I cringed because it seemed so debilitating just to have a crescent-shape added to the foot. Furthering this are pictures in the book, showing what the feet actually look like when this happens - you can see the shriveled remains of feet that look almost mummified, and you can tell some of the extremes that went into making a foot look like that. Yu-I talks about the pain that's she, herself, experienced because of this practice, too; she tells her granddaughter about being three and having her mother try to bind her feet, and then talks about the torment of those moments and how it was her brother that made her stop this because he couldn't deal with her suffering. Yu-I goes on to tell of the pain that this caused her, too, with her always feeling as if she were ugly because she had "big feet" and "big feet" made a person almost untouchable when it comes to marriage. Still, she does marry the poet Hsu Chi-Mo and, for a time, she thinks this is perfect and learns the rites of being a wife. She cares for the mother-in-law, she takes care of the husband's family; basically she becomes a slave and thinks that this dedication is seen by her husband as love. It is only when she moves to a foreign country with her husband that she finds out what he is like and how she is alone, and when she understands that she is utterly abandoned she explains how it feels to want to die. There are other painful things in the book, too, things I can't disclose without messing up part of the tale, but I can say that when she is in Germany and loses something more dear to her than anything that this was devastating to read, making the book almost too heavy to pick up because its honesty was like a barb in the soul. I appreciated that, to be honest, and can say that I have read a lot of pieces of literature but that I have rarely encountered a person like Yu-I that both loves the world she lives in, understands the things that she has experienced, and even knows what forgiveness is like. While this normally would not be something I would recommend, it has my highest recommendation and the most humble form of respect I can give, thinking it an enduring read that really has something to say. I cannot give the book or the voice behind it enough praise.

After long afternoons spent with her great-aunt Yu-i, Pang-Mei, a first-generation Chinese-American, paints this unforgettable saga of a woman, born in Shanghai at the turn of the century to a well-to-do family, who continually defied the expectations of her class and culture. 'In China, a woman is nothing,' began Yu-i over tea and dumplings. 'This is the first lesson I want to give so that you will understand.' Growing up in the perilous years between the fall of the last Emperor and the Communist Revolution, Yu-i led a life marked by a series of rebellions that changed the course of her life, including the first and most lasting: her refusal to have her feet bound. And as Yu-i confides her innermost dreams and demons to her great-niece in this dual memoir, the deeply textured portrait of a woman's life in China is blended with the very Western story of a young woman's search for identity and belonging.

.com When Chang Yu-I was three her mother tried to bind her feet. But the child's cries so tormented her brother that he convinced their mother to stop. This break with convention foreshadowed the extraordinary life Yu-i was to lead. After following her husband, poet Hsu Chi-Mo, a noted philanderer, to Oxford, she made history by becoming the first Chinese woman to have a western-style divorce at age 22. Determined to make her own way, she moved to America and served in a series of prestigious positions, including president of a bank. Written by Yu-i's great niece, Pang-Mei Natasha Chang, *Bound Feet and Western Dress* chronicles the life of this exceptional woman. From Publishers Weekly In this exquisite memoir, Chang Yu-i, the daughter of a distinguished Chinese family, recreates her life for her American-born grandniece, Pang-Mei, a Harvard student who is conflicted about her identity. Born in 1900, during the Boxer Rebellion, Yu-i was a victim of the tension between Western ideas and Chinese tradition. Her parents were sufficiently progressive not to insist on binding her feet but nevertheless believed that a woman was nothing except the obedient servant of her husband, in-laws and children. Dutifully, Yu-i accepted the marriage they arranged for her to Hsu Chi-mo, a poet so entranced by Western culture that, on their wedding night, he declared his intention to have the first Western-style divorce in China. Although this did not happen at once, after Yu-i had born him a son and submitted to several years of his cruelty, he deserted her while she was again pregnant. Refusing his demand that she abort the child, but ashamed to face disgrace at home, and rejecting thoughts of suicide, she joined her brother in Germany, where she educated herself, becoming a teacher and a successful businesswoman?eventually the first woman vice-president of the Shanghai Women's Bank. With details of a life that straddled pre-Communist and Communist China, this is an enthralling tale of a woman who achieved independence despite great odds. Photos. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal A nonfiction Joy Luck Club from a Chinese American lawyer. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.