

Pair of Qing dynasty Chinese bound-foot shoes

£125



REF: 7122

Height: 29 cm (11.4")

Width: 12 cm (4.7")

Depth: 6 cm (2.4")

Description

A pair of 19th century Qing dynasty Chinese bound-foot shoes hand embroidered with silks.

Bound foot shoes, also known as lotus shoes, were an integral part of Chinese culture tied to the practice of foot binding. This tradition began during the Song Dynasty (10th-13th centuries) and persisted for nearly a millennium.

Foot binding involved tightly wrapping young girls' feet to prevent growth, creating a distinctive, tiny foot shape, considered a symbol of beauty, status, and femininity. The shoes were small, often 3-4 inches long, elaborately embroidered, and crafted to emphasise the "lotus" shape of the bound foot.

The practice declined in the early 20th century, officially banned in 1912, yet the shoes remain powerful historical artefacts.