

# In a Bit of a Bind With Your Feet?



As somebody whose main claim to an entitlement to write about feet and their comfort is that I own a pair which I like to indulge, I am occasionally moved (especially when commissioned) to reflect on the motivations of those who take foot-ownership for granted. Like geishas, for example.

Maybe I've got it wrong, but this whole thing with foot-binding doesn't add up. Imagine that you've spent your formative years learning to play the *koto* (Japanese Harp) as well as practising your signing, dancing, deferential conversation and how to hold a teacup whilst trying to cushion your back as a precaution. And then imagine that you've got to perform all these for your *dana* (patron) whilst your feet are killing you.

That's right. Imagine turning up at the tea-house for duty and you're already hobbling. Before you get over the *shyo-ji* (the threshold). Now focus on being a consort. And don't forget that you're supposed to show no emotion. Or that direct communication is taboo.

No wonder they look so pale and don't smile too much. Because I don't know about you, but if my feet hurt then my day is ruined. Especially if I can't moan about them.

It's not as if the Japanese don't have decent footwear and respect for their feet. Most people seem to prefer *jikatabi*, a more comfortable sandal. So Japanese society at a large, usually value foot comfort. But it just seems that they've been playing a peculiarly unkind trick on their feet for centuries. Maybe now is the time for the feet to stand up for themselves.

Has anybody told them about Rieker shoes? Look, I don't want to be single-handedly responsible for the ruination of a cornerstone of the Japanese tourist trade, but I really think that geishas could more happily discharge their duties if they were allowed to wear which are light, flexible and roomy. *"Throw those fetters; leave those constrictive rags at home,"* I'd implore them, *"And find a new freedom wearing Rieker shoes with their unique ANTISTRESS™ feature."*

Ever *poker-faced*, Ewen Campbell, the Managing Director of Rieker UK, concurs. *"Indubitably. To be frank we hadn't thought about penetrating the geisha market, though I'd be surprised if they'd not be far happier wearing Remonte's sporty Lofters, the classic styles created by (pui de) Servas and Dorndorf, or something casual and formal from the Jasmine collection. But we do think about ordinary people who don't want to die on their feet."* He pauses, no doubt to muse on the possibilities of being inundated by subservient and diminutive Oriental ladies. *"Though if any geisha would care to pop along to a shop stocking Riekers, we can fit them up in less time than it takes them to drink a cup of tea."*



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