

Basic Detail Report



Shoe

Date

1900-1914

Medium

Leather, wood, silk

Description

Chinese Court shoes 1900-1914 By the start of the

twentieth century, China had been ruled by the Manchu for over 250 years, a period known as the Qing dynasty. These are the everyday shoes of a woman of high status in the Manchu court. They are made of yellow embroidered satin with a heel made of wood. On formal or public occasions, elevated platforms up to 6 inches high with narrow bases were worn. Unlike the Han women, Manchu women did not bind their feet, had a much more active lifestyle, and were allowed to hunt and ride horses. Their dress and footwear reflected this comparative freedom. The colours of these shoes are very symbolic: Yellow, the colour associated with the Earth, was strictly limited to those closest to the Emperor. Blue represented the East, and spring. Together they were the official colours of the Manchu dynasty. Red was the lucky colour of the Han, so its use here demonstrates that superstitions spread across cultural boundaries. Manchu power was consolidated by enacting strict divisions between the ruling Manchu and the ruled Han. Prescriptions on dress were used to draw divisions between ethnicities and social classes. Restrictions on colour, material and fashion as well as the manner of walking, dressing and speaking were used to encode ethnic values. Of course, ideas and fashions were exchanged between Han and Manchu women, especially the young. And at the beginning of the twentieth century, as China's government promoted modernisation and education, young women's dress changed significantly.

Dimensions

Object/Work: 210 x 100 x 55 mm