

# History of Chinese Shadow Puppets: The Short Version

## Han Dynasty 汉代

206 BCE-220 BCE

Shadow puppets are invented when Emperor Wu is grieving the loss of his lover Lady Li. A wooden figure of Lady Li is created with her shadow projected on a curtain to comfort Emperor Wu.

## Song Dynasty 宋代

960 CE-1279 CE

Urbanization brings puppetry to the common people and becomes more secular. Puppet shows become more associated with entertainment than religion and are especially popular at holiday celebrations like Chinese New Year.

## Qing Dynasty 清代

1644 CE-1912 CE

The Qing Dynasty is the high point of shadow puppetry in Chinese history. Puppet troupes continue to incorporate opera elements into their shows like musical instruments, colors, costumes, songs and stories.

## People's Republic of China 中华人民共和国

1949 CE- Present

Shadow puppetry is a dying art in China with fewer and fewer people learning the tradition. In an effort to preserve the art, shadow puppetry was added to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2011.

## Tang Dynasty 唐代

618 CE-906 CE

The art of making puppets developed rapidly, but the use of puppets and its shows were restricted only to court officials and religious ceremonies.

## Ming Dynasty 明代

1368 CE-1644 CE

As puppetry's popularity grows, so does its connection to local opera forms. Regional puppetry forms begin to emerge as puppet shows adopt characteristics of the local opera.

## Republic Period 中华民国

1912 CE-1949 CE

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), shadow puppets were associated with "superstition," and its practice and creation were denounced. During this time, many artists were forced to stop performing and destroy their puppets. This time almost wiped out the art of puppetry in China except in some very rural areas.

