中國木偶藝術展覽
PUPPETRY OF CHINA

a rare exhibition of figures which illustrate the four styles of Chinese puppet theater.

CENTER FOR PUPPETRY ARTS, Atlanta, Georgia, 1984
COVER:
“Painted face” puppet of Jiao Zan, brave soldier loyal to the warriors of the Yang family at the end of the Song Dynasty. Horizontal rod puppet. h 16½”
Shantou, Guangdong Province.
Contemporary.
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Christopher Stalberg.

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Vincent Anthony, Executive Director
Diane Kempler, Museum Curator

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This project is supported, in part, by the National Endowment for the Humanities through the Georgia Endowment for the Humanities.
The Center for Puppetry Arts is devoted to bringing all aspects of the ancient art of puppetry to the awareness of the public. In the past several years, the Center's Museum has presented exhibitions which explored the use of puppetry in different cultures as well as exhibitions of a thematic nature.

We are excited about offering this exhibition of Chinese puppetry. The growing interest and accessibility to Chinese culture has sparked a desire to become more familiar with their rich and ancient traditions. Working on this exhibition has made me more aware of the commitment of Chinese artists to their art forms. Evident in every aspect of Chinese puppet making—controls, costumes, carving—is a feeling of care and respect for detail which contrasts with our more pragmatic tradition. I hope by viewing this exhibition the public, both puppeteers and nonpuppeteers alike, will be enriched by the aesthetic and human dimensions of this experience.

I am delighted to have had the opportunity to work with Roberta Stalberg as guest curator. Her expertise, extensive scholarship and enthusiasm about Chinese puppetry has played a central role in creating this exhibition. I want to thank Nancy L. Staub for initiating the idea and for her continued energetic support of the Center for Puppetry Arts and the art of puppetry. This exhibition, as well as all other activities at the Center, take place under the guiding spirit of Vincent Anthony, Executive Director. His commitment to puppetry allows an exhibition of this importance to exist. My appreciation to the lenders—Nancy L. Staub, Dr. and Mrs. Christopher Stalberg, Lutz Collection University of Richmond, Professor and Mrs. Derk Bodde, Diane Kempler, Alan Cook, UCLA Museum of Cultural History, Quanzhou Marionette Troupe, Longxi Hand Puppet Troupe, Patricia Altman, Oroville CA Department of Parks. Thanks to Mr. Chu Chen-Kuang for his Chinese calligraphy and seal design. My gratitude to the Lubo Fund and Mr. Elliot L. Haas for their support of this project.

Diane Kempler
Museum Curator
Puppetry is the art of making the unreal believable, of investing the miniature world with its own form of greatness. Over the centuries puppeteers in China have entertained audiences at rural fairs and in city squares, giving special performances to mark festivals, weddings, birthdays, and funerals or to protect villages in times of famine or illness. The performers passed their special skills from father to son, preserving their distinctive movements, songs, and play texts and further refining them in each generation. This performing legacy continues today in China, where young artists are bringing new flair to an age-old art form.

The beginnings of Chinese puppetry lie cloaked in the dust of time. Written records about this art are extremely rare up until about the 12th century AD, and even those descriptions are tantalizingly vague. One popular legend ascribes the invention of puppetry to a craftsman named Master Yan, said to have lived about 1000 BC, who was able to construct puppets so perfect in movement that they could dance and sing with absolute realism. When the craftsman was called to perform before the king, however, his figure winked provocatively at one of the royal concubines and the king ordered the offending performer put to death. The craftsman then took apart his figure before the astonished king, revealing its ingenious inner workings. Probably this figure was an automatic figure moved by internal mechanical devices rather than direct manual control.

The origins of puppetry can probably be traced to religious ceremonies in which the image of a deity or a spirit was animated by a shaman for spiritual guidance, protection, or to bring good fortune. Early Chinese written documents describe funerary figures which were entirely life-like and could move, dance, and sing. In the spring of 1979 such a figure was unearthed in Laixi County, Shandong Province. Found in a tomb dating to the year 107 BC, the figure is constructed of thirteen main strips of wood jointed to permit movement of knees, shoulders, and waist so that the figure can sit, kneel, or stand. The solemn expression on the carved wooden face is awe inspiring even today. It is probable that as part of the funeral ritual, a shaman manipulated such figures and made them seem to take on the soul of the deceased. This connection is preserved in a
popular legend which records that in the second century BC, Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty, heartbroken at the death of his wife, searched for a way to bring her back to life. One of the emperor's subjects set up a lantern and caused the dead wife's image to appear behind a gauze curtain. This is said to be the origin of shadow figures in China.

Although the earliest use of the puppet was in conjunction with funeral rituals and, later, in funeral entertainments, it was only a matter of time before the puppeteer began to perform in happier settings. By the 6th century the figures were used in acrobatic skits featuring the antics of a fat, bald character called Lord Guo or Bald Guo. During the middle ages puppet dramas recounting popular legends and historical tales as well as romances and stories of brave heroes continued to thrive in urban centers. It was the gift of the puppeteer to bring to life the legendary figures of Chinese history and literature, unfolding the timeless themes of loyalty and betrayal, love and hatred, jealousy and compassion. In addition such performances passed down essential elements of classical Chinese culture and history in a form understandable by a population which was largely illiterate.

Chinese puppets—hand, string, and rod—are beautiful art objects in their own right. Puppet characters are clothed in the same elaborate costumes and sport the same colorful facial designs as seen in the human opera. A warrior character, for example, wears a bright silk gown worked front and back with elaborate embroidery depicting a ferocious tiger head to symbolize the strength and courage of the general. On his head is a high, rounded hat denoting rank with a spear-point ornament in front to denote martial skill. To an informed audience, the warrior's personality is clearly revealed by his vivid face makeup, with red denoting bravery and black for loyalty, while solid white patches show cunning or treachery. The creation of a puppet combines the great Chinese art traditions of carving, painting, and embroidery. The figures are made by master craftsmen who have carefully analyzed the components of costume, structure, carving and painting in order to maximize the dramatic effect of these elements. Costumes, for example, rely upon disproportionately
long trailing “water sleeves” of white silk and lengthened skirts to dramatize each movement, while elaborate and colorful hats or headdresses elongate a puppet’s frame and draw attention to the expressive face. Different techniques are used in creating the colorful shadow figures, with donkey skin the preferred material in north China because of its suppleness, translucence and durability. Other leathers were used in different regions to fashion the intricately carved and translucent silhouettes which have delighted audiences for centuries.

The puppet stage, too, could be a thing of beauty. The traditional hand puppet stage of Fujian Province, for example, was an elaborately carved and painted structure with two levels. On the lower level were three doors hung with silk curtains, and on the upper level were three large windows screened with moveable wooden panels. This traditional stage could accommodate two seated hand puppeteers at any time, but it was usual for each performer to manipulate two puppets simultaneously. Often during the course of a play, a puppeteer enacted five or six characters, including movement and voice. The master puppeteer performed the major roles, while the assistant performer, usually serving an apprenticeship, only played minor roles and did not speak or sing in performance. In 1952 the old style seated hand puppet stage was replaced by a larger, more open form which permits ten or more people to perform at the same time in standing positions.

The stories which unfolded on the puppet stage were the same stories depicted by human actors or recounted by professional storytellers in marketplace or temple courtyard. At least as early as the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), professional storytellers had begun to shape popular oral cycles of myths and historical legends, and by the Song Dynasty (960-1279) these tellers of tales were competing with shadow and puppet performers for the audiences which thronged the vast amusement parks of the city. It seems that the most popular stories were those drawn from Chinese historical tales, which could be spun on by a skillful storyteller for days. By the end of the 13th century, however, storytellers had seen their heyday, eclipsed by the appearance of a fully formed human drama. The major subjects of this theatre, like that of the storyteller and puppeteer, were historical tales, love stories, crime cases solved by the detective work of an uncorruptible judge, ghost stories and tales of the supernatural, and legends of bandit heroes.

One of the most popular subjects of the Chinese stage is the story of the Tang Dynasty monk Xuan-zang who journeys to India to bring back the sutras of Buddhism to China. Loosely based upon an actual
occurrence in the 7th century, the tale began to become more and more fantastic until a whole cycle of episodes had grown up about this pilgrimage to the West. These accounts were portrayed upon the stage and in the 16th century were set down in a long, colloquial language novel called *Journey to the West*, by Wu Chengen. The legends center around four travelers: the monk Xuan-zang (also known as Tripitaka), the Monkey King Sun Wukong, the pig Zhu Bajie, and Sha Wujing, known in English as Sandy. But the hero of the tale is indisputably Monkey. Strong, restless, ingenious, mercurial and incorrigible, Monkey derives his power from his awareness of the underlying emptiness of all things. (His name Wukong means “aware of emptiness.”) For centuries he has delighted audiences with his antics, such as stealing the peaches of immortality from heaven. In *Havoc in Heaven*, a popular play for both human and puppet performers, Monkey wears the yellow robes of the emperor, an exceedingly irreverent bit of costuming. Despite the resistance of the Jade Emperor and his spirit forces, Monkey always emerges victorious.

It is unfortunate that there has been almost nothing written in English about the Chinese puppet theatre and that exhibitions of Chinese puppets have been very rare. We hope in this exhibition to present Chinese puppets and shadow figures, with an appreciation for their beautiful construction and design while at the same time giving an idea of the dramatic continuity and folkloric tradition from whence they came. We are also pleased to include in the exhibit a performance-quality marionette which was loaned by the Quanzhou Marionette Troupe especially for this occasion. After seeing the collection, one may be able to understand the two lines of poetry which hung on the sides of a traditional Fujianese hand puppet stage:

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In one moment are created
the ancient stories of a thousand autumns;
Within three feet are engendered
ten thousand miles of mountains and streams.
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Roberta Helmer Stalberg, Ph.D.
Guest Curator
author of *China's Puppet Theatre*
Chinese painting of a traditional stage used by itinerant puppeteers in northern China.
(Photo, Museum of Natural History)

Chaozhou Puppets (Photo, Hong Kong Urban Council)
Students rehearse a traditional hand puppet opera in Zhangzhou, Fujian Province. By gripping a wire between his teeth, the puppeteer controls the movements of his puppet’s hat. (Photo, R. Stalberg)

The gatekeeper (right) smokes a pipe, with a little help from the puppeteer who blows smoke up a small tube inserted within the puppet’s body. (Photo, R. Stalberg)
Young shadow performer from Shaanxi Province skillfully demonstrates the manipulation of two mounted warriors. (Photo, R. Stalberg)
Old Master puppeteer demonstrating his skill. (Photo, R. Stalberg)
李中木偶戏
HAND PUPPETS

Hand puppets are constructed of a silk costume over an interior cotton shell like a glove into which the puppeteer's hand is inserted to manipulate the figure. The lower body stitched to the hollow shell contains cotton-stuffed legs with carved wooden feet. At the ends of the empty sleeves are attached carved hands which may be moveable to grasp miniature props. The hand puppet is controlled by the forefinger supporting the head while the thumb manipulates one arm and the middle, ring, and little fingers manipulate the other arm. Other types of puppets create motion and expression via outside or indirect controls such as strings or rods, but hand puppets require a direct relationship between the figure and the performer's hand.

Hand puppets have a written history of over 500 years in China and their popularity has spread over many regions of north and south China. Some of the best hand puppeteers have come from Fujian Province in southeastern China, and today this province continues to be an important artistic center for hand puppetry.
Sun Wukong (Monkey) wearing gold fillet of the Bodhisattva Guan-yin by which the monk Tripitaka can control him. Hand puppet. H 11 3/4". Fujian tradition, acquired in Taiwan. Early 20th century. Lutz Collection of the University of Richmond.

Pan Guan, arbiter of fate in the Underworld, who during his life had been a magistrate. In an episode of *Journey to the West* he prolongs the life of the Tang Emperor Tai-zong an extra 20 years by changing an entry in the life records of the Underworld. Hand puppet. H 12". Fujian tradition, acquired in Taiwan. Early 20th century. Lutz Collection of the University of Richmond.

The monk Tripitaka wearing the traditional robe of a Buddhist monk with squares to represent patches. Headdress missing. Hand puppet. H 12". Fujian tradition, acquired in Taiwan. Early 20th century. Lutz Collection of the University of Richmond.
High civil official wearing robe with mandarin square emblematic of rank. The peonies woven in the gown are auspicious symbols of wealth and high position. Hand puppet. H 13". Fujian tradition, acquired in Taiwan. Early 20th century. Lutz Collection of the University of Richmond.

Prime minister or high official in general’s armor stiff with gold embroidery and couching. Tiger head on the costume symbolizes the character’s fierceness. Hand puppet. 12 1/4". Fujian tradition, acquired in Taiwan. Early 20th century. Lutz Collection of the University of Richmond.
Comic role of a professional matchmaker, who acts as an intermediary for a commission. Such people, traditionally women, were held to be greedy and cunning because they performed this social service for a fee. Hand puppet. H 11". Fujian tradition, acquired in Taiwan. Early 20th century. Lutz Collection of the University of Richmond.

A coquette with elaborate headdress, hair ornaments, and long, trailing "water sleeves." Hand puppet. H 14½". Zhangzhou, Fujian Province. Contemporary. Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Christopher Stalberg.
Head of a “painted face” role of a warrior, with facial designs to show strength and courage. Hat is a traditional type worn by martial roles. Beard is of real human hair. Hand puppet. H 5¾”. Zhangzhou, Fujian Province. Contemporary. Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Christopher Stalberg.

Unpainted head of a dishonest person whose real character is revealed in his face, which has both an attractive side and an ugly, evil side. Hand puppet. H 3¾”. Fujian Province. Contemporary. Collection of Nancy Lohman Staub.

Painted head of a vulgar, comic woman such as a matchmaker. The head is moveable so she may nod obsequiously. Hand puppet. H 4¼”. Fujian Province. Contemporary. Collection of Nancy Lohman Staub.

Unpainted head of Lei Gong, the Duke of Thunder of the Ministry of Thunder and Storms. He is always represented with the beak of an eagle to show his supernatural connection with the world of the air. Hand puppet. H 3½”. Fujian Province. Contemporary. Collection of Nancy Lohman Staub.

Traditional carved and painted hand puppet stage with five warrior figures and one female role. The name of the theatre, “Fountain of Good Fortune and Peace,” appears on the roof and table hanging. Stage for hand puppets. H 82", W 54", D 22". Fujian tradition, acquired in Taiwan. Early 20th century. Lutz Collection of the University of Richmond.
提线木偶戏
STRING PUPPETS

String puppets (marionettes) are larger than hand puppets, averaging 2½ to 3 feet in height. They incorporate beautifully carved and painted heads, hands and feet, in addition to intricately embroidered costumes. Such puppets are manipulated from above by a minimum of eight strings, while the most complex figures may have more than forty strings and are controlled by two people. The puppeteer moves the figures by means of a wooden control in a cross, “T” or an “I” shape. Holding the handle of the control with thumb and forefinger, the puppeteer shifts the control up or down to execute head and major body movements while the other hand plucks at the strings to add more precise details.

Chinese marionettes have a written tradition of more than 1000 years, and one of the most famous centers of string puppet performance has been the city of Quanzhou in Fujian Province where the marionettist’s art can be traced back over 800 years. The Quanzhou Marionette Troupe has preserved many classical performing traditions such as the soft, southern melodies called kuilei diao (“puppet melodies”) which were developed especially for the marionette theatre. Due to the nature of this music, the pace of the marionette theatre is deliberate and graceful rather than the forceful staccato of the hand puppet stage.

The Chinese say that the skill of the string puppeteer is most clearly displayed in the walk of the puppet, which requires fluid coordination of legs, feet, and arms for a realistic effect. Because the marionette is capable of very expressive movements, the distinctive style of a character’s walk also reveals that person’s inner nature. Female characters progress with a slow, fluid gait and gentle sway, while military figures have a forceful, abrupt pace. Officials walk with a dignified, deliberate step and comic characters may reveal all sorts of eccentric or peculiar habits in their walk.
Character of Little Blue, valiant woman warrior and faithful companion to Lady White in *The Tale of the White Snake*. Bold, impertinent, loyal and hot blooded, Little Blue is a true folk heroine. String puppet. H 22". Quanzhou, Fujian Province. Contemporary. Special loan by the Quanzhou Marionette Troupe.
"Painted face" military character with beard of real hair. Carved hands to hold weapons. String puppet. H 24⅞". Fujian Province. Late 19th or early 20th century. Collection of Center for Puppetry Arts.
仕紙木偶戲
Rod puppets are the most widespread form of puppets in China today. From north to south and east to west, almost every province in China numbers rod puppet performances among its entertainments. Most rod puppets are larger than hand puppets or shadow figures, which makes them suitable for performance in front of large audiences. Because the rods can be concealed within a puppet's costume, such figures offer no distraction of strings or external control devices.

The rod puppet is supported by a thick, central rod which may be neck-length or may extend further than the hem of a figure's costume. Two smaller rods control the puppet's arms and may be concealed inside the sleeves of the costume or may be exterior. Traditional rod puppets had no legs or feet.

China's many different types of rod puppets may be roughly divided into three categories based upon size. The smallest type, from 11” to 18”, was popular among itinerant performers in the north. Medium-size rod puppets of around 36” were popular in Sichuan, Hunan, and Guangdong Provinces and in the cities of Yangzhou and Shanghai. The largest rod puppets are the unusual life-size figures found in northern Sichuan Province, where these large figures were incorporated into performances in which small children carried on the backs of performers acted out roles with movements and costumes which imitated those of rod puppets. Life-size rod puppets continue to be used today along with medium-size rod puppets in performances by the national Chinese Art Puppet Troupe of Peking. Other important contemporary rod troupes are those of Shanghai, Hunan Province, and Guangdong Province.
Zhu Bajie, the Pig of the Eight Prohibitions, fellow pilgrim of Monkey and the monk Tripitaka. Pigsy, as he is usually known in English, although a monk, is prey to physical appetites which constantly get him into trouble. Rod puppet. H 15 1/2". Northeastern China. Early 20th century. Lutz Collection of the University of Richmond.

"Painted face" puppet of Jiao Zan, brave soldier loyal to the warriors of the Yang family at the end of the Song Dynasty. Horizontal rod puppet. H 16\(\frac{1}{2}\)". Shantou, Guangdong Province. Contemporary. Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Christopher Stalberg.
“Painted face” role of warrior Meng Liang, famous for his courage and resourcefulness. He was sent twice to recover the bones of General Yang Jiye, Commander of the Song forces, from within Mongol territory. On his second mission he murdered his friend Jiao Zan by mistake and after completing his task, he committed suicide. Horizontal rod puppet. H 16½”. Shantou, Guangdong Province. Contemporary. Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Christopher Stalberg.
Young scholar with real hair. This style of hair is worn by male roles to reveal great fear or distress. At such moments they toss their head and spin the long pony-tail. Costume embroidery includes longevity symbols. Rod puppet. H 21½". Northeastern China. Early 20th century. Collection of Alan G. Cook.

This Chaozhou figure, a doll, was not used as a puppet, but shows the development of the horizontal rod form. Figure is of a married woman, and the peony embroidery symbolizes wealth and high position, as does the bronze tripod on the lower part of her gown. Headdress missing. Doll. H 10". Chaozhou, Guangdong Province. Late 19th or early 20th century. UCLA Museum of Cultural History.
"Painted face" role of a military commander. Elaborate headdress with spearpoint ornament. Puppet has two beards, one black and one gray, to distinguish age within a play or in different plays. Hands are carved to hold weapons. Rod puppet. H 35". Canton. Contemporary costume. Head circa 1930. Collection of Nancy Lohman Staub.
Mechanical figure of Zhou Yu, heroic general of the Three Kingdoms Period (220–316 AD). As the famous poet Su Shi wrote of Zhou Yu, "Amid the talk and laughter, he routed his enemy as so much flying ashes and scattered smoke." Part of a long historical tradition, these mechanical figures could be manipulated by the flow of water, internal rods and wires, or from below, as with this figure, by strings and wires. Mechanical figure. H 25 ¾". Canton tradition brought to California. Mid-19th century. Chinese Temple Collection of the Oroville, CA Dept. of Parks.
皮影戏
SHADOW FIGURES

The Chinese have always considered shadow theatre as a separate category of entertainment from the type of three-dimensional puppets which have been described earlier. Although the shadow and puppet theatres both draw upon the body of traditional plays, the shadow theatre is distinct in that its movements are rendered within the two-dimensional world of the playing screen. The shadow master fills the stage with clouds and mountains, oceans and trees, where his characters fly, jump, and spin. Special techniques also add to the drama of a shadow play, whose screen is perfectly suited to unique visual effects such as magical transformations, beheadings, or the creation of multiple images.

Shadow figures are formed of thin, translucent pieces of leather cut into complex designs which might have intricate latticework decoration. After colors are added, a coat of wu-tong oil is applied to give durability and luster, a practice which originated in northeast China but spread quickly to most other regions. The structure of the shadow figure is modelled upon the joints of the human physique so that movements of the shadow figure produce natural-looking postures. As with three-dimensional puppets, superstition held that the figure came alive when the head was joined to the body.

The figure is manipulated by a central rod attached to the neck and two rods attached to the figure's hands. Seldom do the legs of a shadow figure require a separate control rod, except to hold a leg upraised. In that case the performer takes an extra rod and inserts it for temporary control of the legs.

Their name notwithstanding, shadow figures are not designed to cast shadows but to act as colorful silhouettes viewed through a white screen. The audience watches the play from in front of the screen, while the performers move about behind with their figures lit by lanterns and later by oil and electric lights. Lights are placed in the center rear between the screen and the players or overhead. Perhaps the most fundamental rule of performance is that shadow figures—unless entering, exiting, or in transformation—must be held flat against the shadow screen in order to create maximum clarity of color and outline. With even the slightest
deviation from the screen, their outline blurs and their beautiful colors dim.

No one knows precisely when the shadow theatre first appeared, nor is its place of origin clear. Some researchers propose that this dramatic form originated in India and was carried to China through Central Asia on the trade routes known as the Silk Road. Others argue just as forcefully that China was the birthplace of the shadow theatre. Although legend ascribes the birth of the shadow play to the 2nd century BC, the earliest written references to the form date to the Song Dynasty.

The cities of Peking and Tangshan have been important historical centers for the shadow performer's art, and the provinces of Shaanxi, Sichuan, and Hunan have all developed distinctive styles of performance. Today the shadow players of Tangshan and Peking and of Hunan and Sichuan Provinces still stand out for their distinctive, polished performances.

Wife of an official, wearing mandarin square, “jade belt,” and cloud collar decoration. Shadow figure. H 13 1/2”. Shaanxi Province. Late 19th to early 20th century.

Young, unmarried woman. Shadow figure. H 12 3/4”. Shaanxi Province. Late 19th to early 20th century.

Elegant woman in the costume of a dancer. Shadow figure. H 13 1/4”. Shaanxi Province. Late 19th to early 20th century.

Woman of high rank in elegant costume with floral headdress. Note the tiny bound feet. Shadow figure. H 12 1/2”. Shaanxi Province. Late 19th to early 20th century.

Unmarried woman warrior in full battle dress, with standards and two pheasant feathers. Note the character's tiny bound feet, a concession to femininity which would have hindered any martial engagements. Shadow figure. H 13 1/4”. Shaanxi Province. Late 19th to early 20th century.

“Painted face” role of a warrior in full battle dress, with standards on his back to lead the troops and two long pheasant feathers in his headdress. Beard is of real human hair. Shadow figure. H 14”. Shaanxi Province. Late 19th to early 20th century.

An official in elaborate costume with floral medallions. The headdress shows his official position and the spearpoin ornament his military prowess. Shadow figure. H 12 3/4”. Shaanxi Province. Late 19th to early 20th century.

Civil official wearing court dress with mandarin square and “jade belt.” Shadow figure. H 12 1/2”. Shaanxi Province. Late 19th to early 20th century.

“Painted face” role whose facial decoration indicates his honesty and courage. The exquisitely carved headdress is that of a military commander, and the coiling dragon shows his royal status. Shadow figure. H 12 3/4”. Shaanxi Province. Late 19th to early 20th century.

Civil official in a comic role. His white face and the red mark on his cheek indicate he is not to be trusted. His costume, headdress and queue are those of a Qing Dynasty official; note the sleeves in the shape of a horse's hooves, which was characteristic of the Manchu official costume. Shadow figure. H 12 3/4”. Shaanxi Province. Late 19th to early 20th century.

Collection of Professor and Mrs. Derk Bodde.
Mounted general, "painted face" role, wearing armor and commander's headdress. Note the intricate detail of the horse's bound tail. Shadow figure. H 16". Shaanxi Province. Late 19th to early 20th century. Collection of Professor and Mrs. Derk Bodde.
The dragon was thought to have the power of transformation and control over rain. From early times this symbol was associated with the emperor, for whom the five-clawed dragon was to be reserved as an exclusive decoration. Shadow figure. H 7 1/2", W 18 3/4". Peking. Late 19th to early 20th century. Collection of Professor and Mrs. Derk Bodde.

Xi Wang Mu, the Royal Mother of the West, riding on a crane. She was believed to live in a paradise realm in the Western Kunlun Mountains, where the peaches of longevity grew. Shadow figure. H 14 1/2". Peking. Late 19th to early 20th century. Collection of Professor and Mrs. Derk Bodde.

Demon figure, probably the Cow Devil King, Monkey's antagonist in an episode of *Journey to the West*. Shadow figure. H 13". Peking. Late 19th to early 20th century. Collection of Professor and Mrs. Derk Bodde.
Man pushing a cart. Shadow figure. H 12". Peking. Late 19th to early 20th century. Lutz Collection of the University of Richmond.

Lantern-carrier. Shadow figure. H 10¼". Peking. Late 19th to early 20th century. Lutz Collection of the University of Richmond.
Elaborate imperial barge carrying a female of the royal family. Shadow figure.
H 33¾", W 36¼". Peking. Late 19th to early 20th century. Collection of Professor and Mrs. Derk Bodde.


A qilin or mythological composite creature having the body of a deer, head of a dragon, hooves of a horse and scales of a fish. It was said that the creature appeared only during periods of order and harmony brought about by a virtuous ruler. Because it is thought to live for a thousand years, the qilin also symbolizes longevity. Shadow figure. H 9 3/4”. Peking. Early 20th century. Collection of Diane Kempler.
Elephant-pulled carriage carrying a noblewoman. The carriage is decorated with dragons, bats, peonies and other symbols of high rank and good fortune. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties elephants were sent from the vassal state of Annam (N. Vietnam) to the Chinese court, where they added to the opulence and majesty of imperial ceremonies. Shadow figure. H 24", W 37½". Peking. Late 19th to early 20th century. Collection of Professor and Mrs. Derk Bodde.
The Center for Puppetry Arts was founded in 1978 to promote puppetry as a performance and visual art form. It is the only major arts institution in the United States devoted entirely to puppetry. The Center has three areas of programming: Performance Program for both children and adults, Museum Program and School for Puppetry. Each season our Museum Program features three large-scale exhibitions of puppetry from all over the world. Our permanent collection features over 175 figures. The principal benefactor and founder of the Center for Puppetry Arts Collection is Nancy Lohman Staub.

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