

POPULAR DRAMA

PUPPET THEATER

Puppet theater also was extremely popular in old China, especially among the common people. Shadow puppets, string puppets or marionettes, and hand puppets all were used. Themes presented were derived both from the classical drama, as exemplified by the "Chinese opera," and from religious drama. Puppet theater, however, has made its appeal to the popular taste by having the plots recited in the living language, rather than in the literary language characteristic of the legitimate theater. Orchestras accompany puppet drama just as they do the Chinese opera.

Shown here are shadow puppets and hand puppets. Shadow puppets possibly originated in China, where they are mentioned in historical texts of the second century B.C. First used in presenting religious drama, they were used later as a medium for entertainment. After spreading through the rest of Asia the shadows moved slowly westward, reaching Europe only in the latter half of the 18th century. Even today the supposed debt to China is manifested in the French name given to shadow puppets, *ombres chinoises*. The manner in which the puppets are used is shown in the light boxes above, although the lively action, obtained by manipulating the figures by means of sticks attached at the joints, is not represented.

The other two forms of puppets used in China are of later and presumably of foreign origin. Hand-puppet theater, picturesquely known in some parts of China as "top-of-the-wall theater," is exemplified by the rare and wonderfully made puppets shown here. Heads, hands and feet are carefully carved and painted, and the little figures are costumed in such a way as to simulate the live actors on the legitimate stage. The photograph showing "top-of-the-wall theater" was taken at a religious festival in a small town on the east coast of Taiwan in 1960, but the miniature stage and the method of presentation are traditional.

Although still presented in its several forms, puppet theater no longer is common in China. For further information on various forms of Chinese puppet theater, especially the shadows, see the Museum handbook, *Oriental Theatricals* (1923), by Berthold Laufer.

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<u>Cat. No.</u>	<u>Description</u>
235677	Hand Puppet. Mythological figure of Yang Jen. 1/2 Chinese face, 1/2 non-Chinese face. Wood, satin, cotton.
235678	Shadow Puppet. Horse and cart. Donkey skin.
235682	Hand Puppet. Soldier. Wood head, celluloid hands and boots; satin robe w/cotton lining. - <i>np #98816</i>
235697	Hand Puppet. Empress. Wood, silk, satin, cotton. moveable fingers. - <i>np #98822</i>
235703	Hand Puppet. General, Chiang Shih-kuei. Moveable fingers. Wood head, hands, boots; satin & cotton robe. - <i>np #98817</i>
235708	Hand Puppet. Lady General, Li Hua. Wood; satin and cotton costume. - <i>np #98821</i>
235713	Hand Puppet. Foreign King, with sword, red beard. Wood head, hands, boots; satin, cotton, wool costume. - <i>np #98825</i>
235714	Hand Puppet. Korean General, Su Wen. Wood head, hands, boots; satin & cotton robe. - <i>np #98820</i>
235724	Hand Puppet. Monkey King, Sun Wu-K'ung. Wood head, hands, boots; cotton robe. - <i>np #98818</i>
235742	Hand Puppet. General. Tongue, jaw, upper face moveable. Wood, cotton, fur. -
235743	Hand Puppet. Chinese General. Wood head, hands & boots; satin robe with fur & cotton trim; & elaborate headdress. - <i>np #98823</i>
235743 C	<i>np #98826</i> Painted red wood table for hand puppet theater.
235756	Hand Puppet. Horse or Donkey. Wood head; red velvet body, green plastic bridle.
254479	Shadow Puppet. Dragon. Painted & varnished hide.
254481	Shadow Puppet. Lamp Post. Painted & varnished hide.
254482	Shadow Puppet. Armchair. Painted & varnished hide
254483	Shadow Puppet. Cupboard with hinged doors. Painted & varnished hide.