Shadow Puppetry

It is thought that shadow puppetry originated in China over 2000 years ago during the Han Dynasty (140 – 87 BCE). The emperor Han Wudi was heartsick after the death of his lady, so an advisor invented a way to see the late Empress through shadows. Also known as “pi ying xi” or *leather shadow play*, the contrast and movement between light and shadow bring the puppet characters to life. Combined with music, singing and storytelling, shadow puppetry embodies Chinese folklore. Considered an irreplaceable and intangible source of cultural heritage, shadow puppetry is on a state-level list of Chinese cultural heritage by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Chinese local authorities, along with non-governmental organizations are recording and preserving this tradition. They also support teaching the custom to children to keep the tradition alive for generations.