

Paper-Folding (Origami)

Taught by

Yung-Ming Chen

December 12, 2003

Chinese invented how to make paper. But, is paper-folding originated from China? It is probably not an easy question to answer. Today, paper-folding is well-known as origami, a Japanese word for paper-folding (*oru* means "to fold", and *kami* means "paper"). So, many people think that paper-folding is originated from Japan. I personally think that it may not be right either. Back to 13th century, a picture of Boat in the book of "Tractatus de Sphaera Mundi" by Johannes de Sacrobosco looks exactly like a paper-folding boat. The only way, historians think the paper-folding could get to Europe is probably through the Moors (the Arabic people). But Japanese influence during 13th century hasn't reached there yet. But one thing for sure is that paper-folding has reached Europe long before we know. In 17th century, records show paper-folding already existed in several European countries. So, paper-folding or origami is really a world wide activity.

To me, the most intriguing part of paper-folding is the "modern origami". I once went to the Metropolitan Museum at New York City and saw a Christmas tree which was completely decorated by many three dimensional origami animals. The beauty and the realness of the origami animals encouraged me to start learning paper-folding or modern origami. Later, I met a Japanese mathematician, whose Ph.D. dissertation is about the fractal theory in origami (Whoa! It almost blew my mind off.). I then recognized that origami not only has an artistic side but also has a mathematical side. Paper-folding is really a fascinating thing to do.

So, if you think your children will enjoy paper-folding, come and join us. In this class, we will start from the beginner fold and learn some paper-folding terminology. The beginner could learn the simple stuff as long as he/she could fold paper. The advanced folder could refresh their skills and go for more advanced folding and help out the beginner too. If you are really good, we could invent some shape together.