The Lexington Chinese School’s Cultural Fair: Origami

By: Wendy Wei

On May 23, 2015, the Lexington Chinese School hosted the 3rd annual cultural fair. The cultural fair is a fun, hands-on event, with performances, arts, activities, raffles, catering, and much, much more! One of my favorite activities was origami. At this year’s cultural fair, Qi Zhou’s origami delights and intrigues many students.

We all know what origami is; the art of folding paper. Most of us have even done origami. When it was first created in Japan, paper folding was used strictly for ceremonial, often religious, purposes. It was in the Edo period (1603–1868) when paper folding became a recreational art.

The first set of written instructions for paper folding was written in 1797, in Akisato Rito’s *Sembazuru Orikata*, or “thousand crane folding.” It was from this book, and thousands of others, that make origami what it is.

When you think of origami, what do you imagine? Paper cranes? Mrs. Zhou’s origami is different from the origami most people imagine. Using small sheets of paper, Mrs. Zhou folds over a hundred tiny triangles, the painstakingly fits them together to form the shape of an animal. At the cultural fair, she displayed a swan, dragon, and pig.

These beautiful paper creatures are very fragile. Glue, tape, and scissors are forbidden in origami, so each triangle must be fitted snugly. Even so, should you pull too hard on a dragon’s tail, or swan’s head, it will pop right off!

“This is fun, something definitely worth the effort! I’ve made three triangles, and only need, like, eighty more!” says Hannah Zou, “It’s time-consuming, but sooooo worth it! I mean, look at that dragon!”

The cultural fair is a great opportunity for children to experience Asian cultures and arts. Origami is just one example; there are so many more fun activities and games to try. With all of these choices, there is always something for everyone.

