



# *The ART of* PAPER FOLDING

**The flight back from Oaxaca seemed to take forever**, but I fear it was only Judith's disgust with me that made it seem interminable. Anyway, we got home and life returned to normal, or even better than normal, even supernormal, if there is such a word. I told Judith I was sorry about the comments I made about her parents and the *Day of the Dead* celebration, and she apologized for her brazen flirting with that good-for-nada bullfighter. Then, in an effort to cement our new-found bond, Judith enrolled us in an **origami** class. "Oh great, I thought, "my marriage has been reduced to folded paper." But now that I've been in the class for a few weeks, I must admit that I love it. Origami is amazing and beautiful.

The name origami was coined in 1880 for the words *oru* (to fold) and *kami* (paper). It started in the first century AD in China. (I thought it started in Japan, but Judith quickly pointed out the error in my thinking.) They say that's when paper

making started, and with paper making came paper folding. The Chinese developed some simple forms, some of which survive to this day. Buddhist monks brought Origami to Japan in the sixth century AD. It caught on quickly throughout the culture: paper was used in architecture and in many everyday rituals. Many of the earliest designs have been lost, since there was nothing written down about origami until 1797 with the publication of the *Senbaduru Origami* (How to Fold One Thousand Cranes). *The Kan no mado* (Window of Midwinter), a comprehensive collection of traditional Japanese figures, was published in 1845.

Origami flourished in other parts of the world, as well. Arabs brought the secrets of paper making to North Africa, and in the eighth century AD, the Moors brought the secrets of Spain. The Moors, devoutly religious, were forbidden to create representational figures. Their paper folding was a study in geometry. After the Moors were

## **Tsuru no On-gaeshi** (*A Repaying Crane*)

Once upon a time, there was a poor hunter. One day, he came across a trapped crane. He took pity on the crane and released it. A few days later, a lovely woman visited his house, and asked him to shelter for the night. Soon the two got married.

The bride was sweet in disposition as well as beautiful, so they lived happily. But the hunter couldn't afford to support his new wife. One day, she said she would weave cloth for him to sell at market, but she told him never to see her weaving.

She stayed in a weaving hut for three days. When she finished weaving, she emerged with a beautiful fabric.

He brought the fabric to town, where merchants were surprised and paid gold for it. The fabric was very rare and called *Tsuru-no-senba-ori* (thousand feathers of crane).