

Kite History

From China to the Rest of the World



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Kites were invented in China. They first appeared 2,000 years ago. China had all the right tools to make a kite. It had silk. Silk is very strong and very light. It had paper. It had bamboo. Bamboo is a grass. It grows very tall and gets very hard. It is very light and hollow inside. It is like wood. You can use all of these materials to make a kite. You can use silk string for kite string. You can use silk fabric to make the kite's body. You can also use paper. You can use bamboo to make the kite's frame.

Kites were popular in China. People used them for many things. They flew kites for fun. They also used them for serious purposes.

From China to the Rest of the World

In 549, the Chinese army used a paper kite to send a message. This message helped them during a rescue mission. Chinese armies began to use kites more often. They used them to measure distances. They used them to send messages.

Soon, other countries learned about kites from China. India was the first. There, kite flying became a sport. It is known as kite fighting. Kite fighting spread to nearby countries. These include Pakistan and Afghanistan.



A shop for fighter kites in India

In kite fighting, players use special string. It is called manja. It is coated with powdered glass. Manja is very sharp. It can cut your skin. You have to wear gloves when you touch it. Many kite fighters compete at one time. They all fly their kites in the sky. To win, you try to cut the other players' kites from the sky. You use your sharp manja to cut their strings. First, you wrap your string around another player's string. Then you pull. Pulling cuts through the other kite's string. This sets the other kite free. Kite runners run to catch the freed kites. The last player with a kite in the air is the winner.

From China to the Rest of the World

Kites came to Europe in the 1500s. They became a popular toy for children. Kite popularity spread further west. Adults began to use kites for scientific experiments. In 1749, Alexander Wilson attached a thermometer to a kite. He used it to measure the air temperature at 3,000 feet. Benjamin Franklin flew a kite during a lightning storm to prove that lightning was made of electricity. The Wright brothers used kites to do research when they were developing the first airplane. In the 1950s, NASA began to use kites to help with space exploration.



Stunt kite, controlled by two strings

Today, kites come in all shapes and sizes. Some have one string. Some have two or more strings. Some have tails. Some are box-shaped. Some kites became so big that they can be used to fly people—these are called hang gliders. Scientists continue to use kites to test weather and climate patterns. Children continue to enjoy flying kites for fun

all over the world. Major kite-fighting festivals are still fought across India and its neighbors. But some of the most beautiful kites can only be found in China—where kite flying first began.

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Kites were invented in China about 2,000 years ago. China had all the right materials for building a kite. It had silk. Silk is a fabric. It is made from the thread of the silkworm. Silk is very strong and very light. China also made paper from wood pulp. Bamboo grows in China. Bamboo is a grass. It grows very tall and gets very hard. It is very light and hollow inside. It is like wood. You can use all of these materials to make a kite. You can use silk string for kite string. You can use silk fabric to make the kite's body. You can also use paper. You can use bamboo to make the kite's frame.

Kites became popular all over China. People began to use kites for many things. People flew kites for fun. They also used them for serious purposes.

From China to the Rest of the World

The first recorded use of a kite in China was in the year 549. A paper kite was used to send a message during a rescue mission. Later, armies used kites for different reasons. They used them to measure distances. They used them to send messages.

As kites became popular in China, their popularity spread to other countries. The joy of kite flying spread to India. There, kite flying became a sport. It is known as kite fighting. Kite fighting spread to nearby countries. These include Pakistan and Afghanistan.



A shop for fighter kites in India

In kite fighting, players use special string called manja. The string is covered in glue. Then it is coated with powdered glass. Manja is very sharp. You have to use special gloves to protect your fingers from it. Usually, many kite fighters play at one time. They all fly their kites in the sky. Each player tries to cut the other players' kites from the sky. To cut another player's kite loose, you need to wrap your kite's string around your opponent's and pull. By pulling, you use your sharp string to cut through that of your opponent's. This sets his or her kite free. The last player with a kite in the air is the winner. As each kite is cut loose, kite runners run to catch them.

From China to the Rest of the World

By the 1500s, kites appeared in Europe. They became a popular toy for children. Kite popularity spread further west. Adults began to use kites for scientific experiments. In 1749, Alexander Wilson attached a thermometer to a kite. He used it to measure the air temperature at 3,000 feet. Benjamin Franklin flew a kite during a lightning storm to prove that lightning was made of electricity. The Wright brothers used kites to do research when they were developing the first airplane. In the 1950s, NASA began to use kites to help with space exploration.



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Today, kites come in all shapes and sizes. Some have one string. Some have two or more strings. Some have tails. Some are box-shaped. Some kites became so big that they could be used to fly people—these are called hang gliders. Scientists continue to use kites to test weather and climate patterns. Children continue to enjoy flying kites for fun all over the world. Major kite-fighting

festivals are still fought across India and its neighbors. But some of the most beautiful kites can only be found in China—where kite flying first began.

Kite History

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Kites were invented in China about 2,000 years ago. Unlike the rest of the world, China had all the right materials for building a kite. It had silk, which is a fabric made from the thread of the silkworm. Silk is very strong and very light. China also made paper from wood pulp. At that time, most of the world used parchment, which is dried and stretched animal skin. China also had bamboo. Bamboo is actually a type of grass. It grows very tall and gets very hard. It is very light and hollow inside. It can be used like wood. All of these materials are perfect for making a kite. The silk could be twisted into string for kite string. Silk fabric could be used to make the body of the kite. Paper could also be used to make the body of the kite. Bamboo was light and strong enough to make a kite frame.

As kite popularity spread, people began to use kites for many things. People flew kites for fun. But they also used them for more serious purposes.

From China to the Rest of the World

The earliest recorded use of a kite in China was in the year 549. A paper kite was used to send a message during a rescue mission. Later, armies used kites to measure distances or send messages over short distances. Even later, people would use kites for scientific experiments. And then there were those who used kites in competitions.

As kites became popular in China, their popularity spread to other countries. The joy of kite flying spread to India. There, kite flying became a sport known as kite fighting. The sport of kite fighting spread to countries near India. Kite fighting became—and continues to be—very popular in countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan.



A shop for fighter kites in India

In kite fighting, players use special string called manja. The string is covered in glue and coated with powdered glass. The string is very sharp and you have to use special gloves to protect your fingers from it. Usually, many kite fighters play at one time. They all fly their kites in the sky. To win, you need to wrap your kite's string around your opponent's and pull. By pulling, the sharp string cuts through your opponent's string. This sets his or her kite free. The last player with a kite in the air is the winner. When kites are cut loose, kite runners run to catch the freed kites just before they land.

From China to the Rest of the World

By the 1500s, kites even appeared in Europe. They became a popular toy for children. Kite popularity spread further west. Adults began to use kites for scientific experiments. In 1749, Alexander Wilson attached a thermometer to a kite. He used it to measure the air temperature at 3,000 feet. Benjamin Franklin flew a kite during a lightning storm to prove that lightning was made of electricity. The Wright brothers used kites to do research when they were developing the first airplane. In the 1950s, NASA began to use kites to help with space exploration.



Christopher Michel via Wikimedia Commons

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neighbors. But some of the most beautiful kites can only be found in China—where kite flying first began.