

China Folk Arts Series



CHINESE KITE

CHINA INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

Compiled by Sun Bingshan & Yu Manhong

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Preface



Kite-flying is an age-old tradition in China. Its history can be traced back to the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC) and the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) when Mozi^❶ and Lu Ban^❷, according to historical records, made a wooden kite respectively. Famous kite-makers of the Qin-Han period (221 BC-AD 25) included Han Xin^❸ and Zhang Liang^❹. Since then, accounts of kite-flying can be found in many pre-Tang annals such as the *History of Southern Dynasties* and the *New History of Tang*^❺; mostly kites were used for military purposes, either carrying messages or exerting a deterrent effect on the enemy forces.

During the Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1279) dynasties, as the economy was booming and people lived a settled life, flying paper kites became a form of recreation, popular both at court and among the populace. In warm spring, kites of various colors fly up and down while the kite strings produce a buzzing sound in the wind, thus the name of *feng-zheng* (kite in Chinese; *feng* means wind, and *zheng* refers to a traditional 21- or 25-stringed plucked instrument similar to the zither).

Traditionally, Beijing, Tianjin, Weifang in Shandong Province, and Nantong in Jiangsu Province have been well known for their kites. The Beijing kites of magnificent appearance are made in an imperial style, the Tianjin kites of excellent workmanship are small and exquisite, and the kites of Weifang and Nantong painted in rich colors feature a pronounced local flavor.

❶ Reverent name for Mo Di (c. 468-376 BC), a thinker and scientist of the pre-Qin period and founder of Mohism.

❷ A master craftsman of the Spring and Autumn Period, since deified as the patron saint of carpenters.

❸ A strategist in the Qin (221-206 BC) and Western Han (206 BC-AD 25) dynasties.

❹ A statesman of the early Western Han Dynasty.

❺ They both belong to the *Twenty-four Histories* – dynastic histories from remote antiquity till the Ming Dynasty.

【CONTENTS】



Soft-winged Kite 1

Hard-winged Kite 27

Giant Kite 59

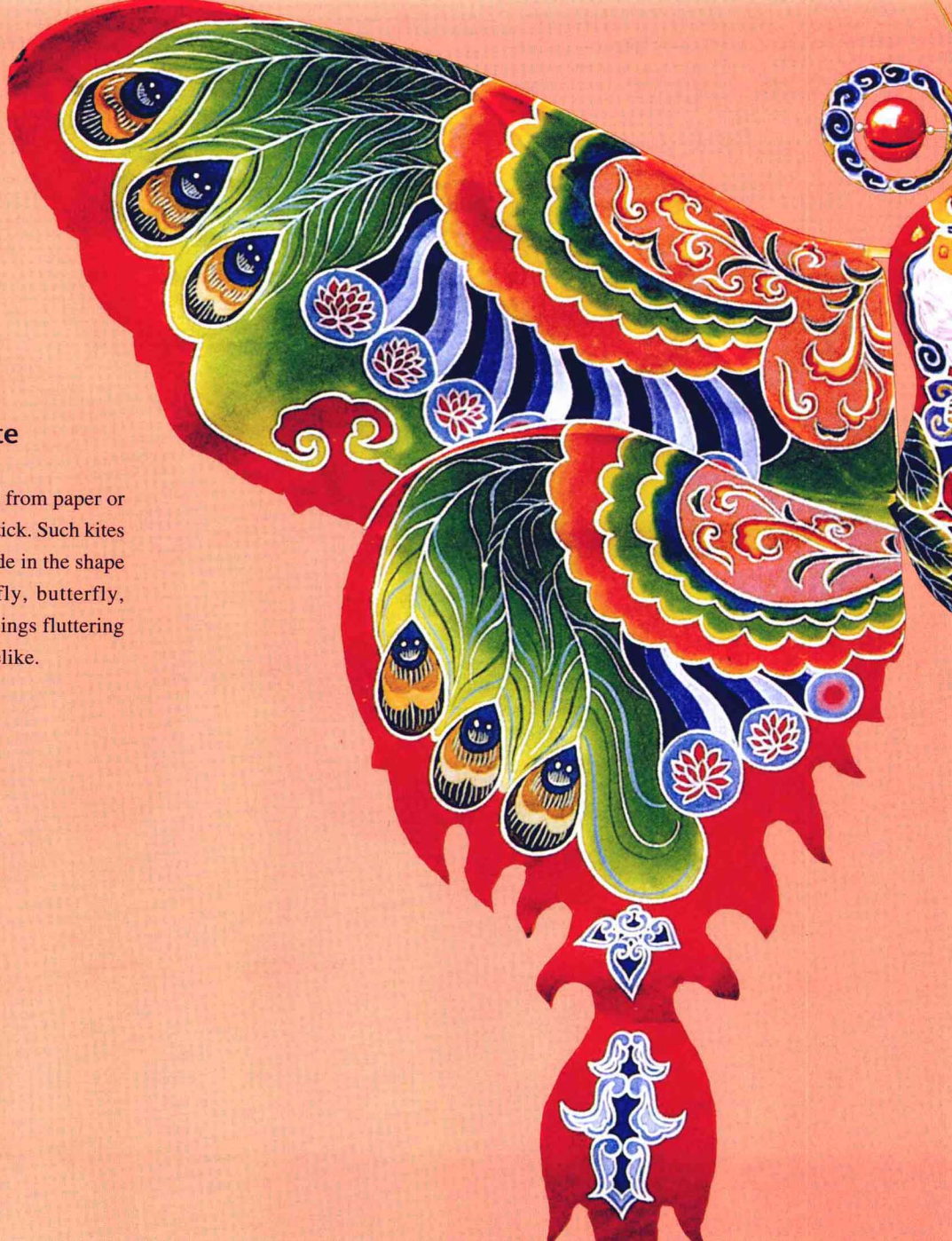
Three-dimensional Kite 83

Composite Kite 91



Soft-winged Kite

Making method: The wings cut from paper or silk are simply pasted on a bamboo stick. Such kites without a framework are mostly made in the shape of hawk, crane, phoenix, dragonfly, butterfly, cicada, etc. When flied, with their wings fluttering in the air the kites are extremely lifelike.





Colored Butterfly. Weifang.

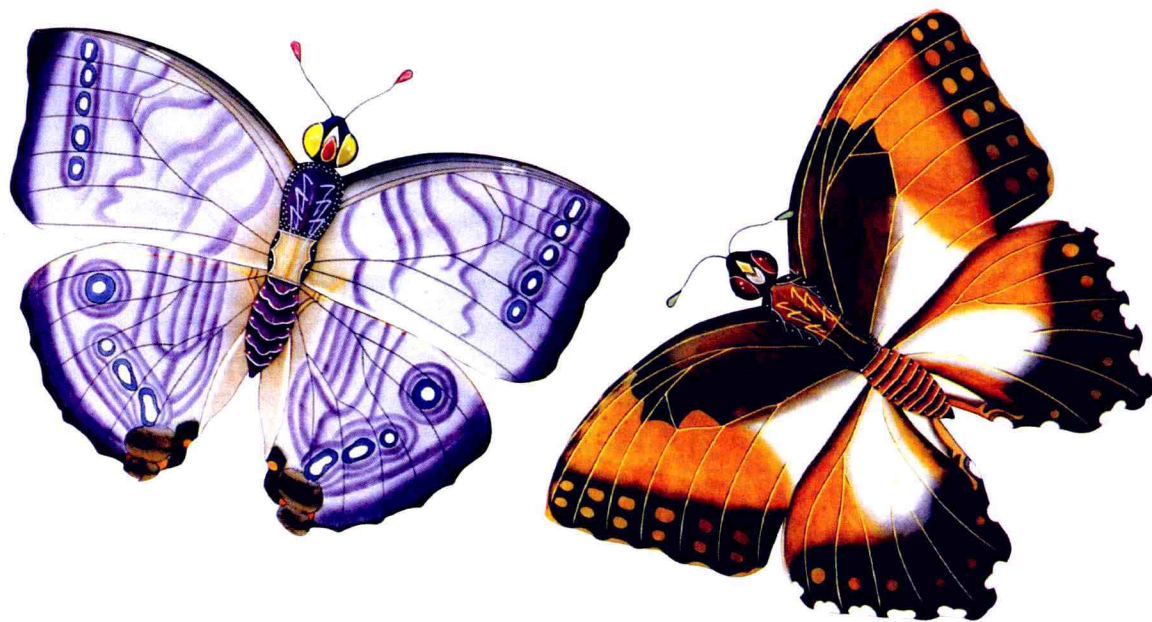


Colored Butterfly. Weifang.





Colored Butterfly. Weifang.



Colored Butterfly. Weifang.



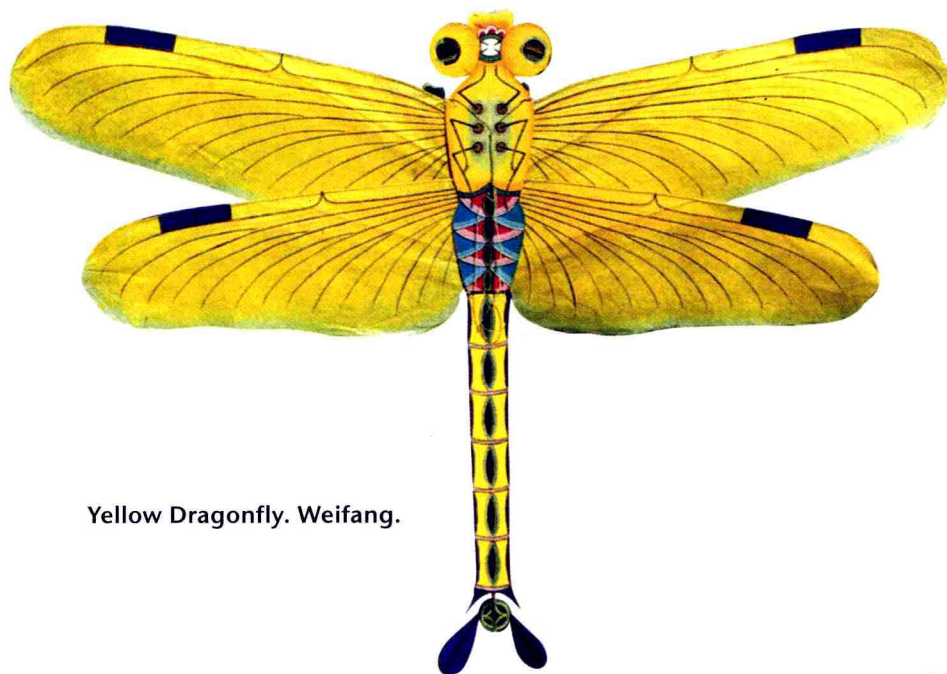


Colored Butterfly. Weifang.



Colored Butterfly. Weifang.

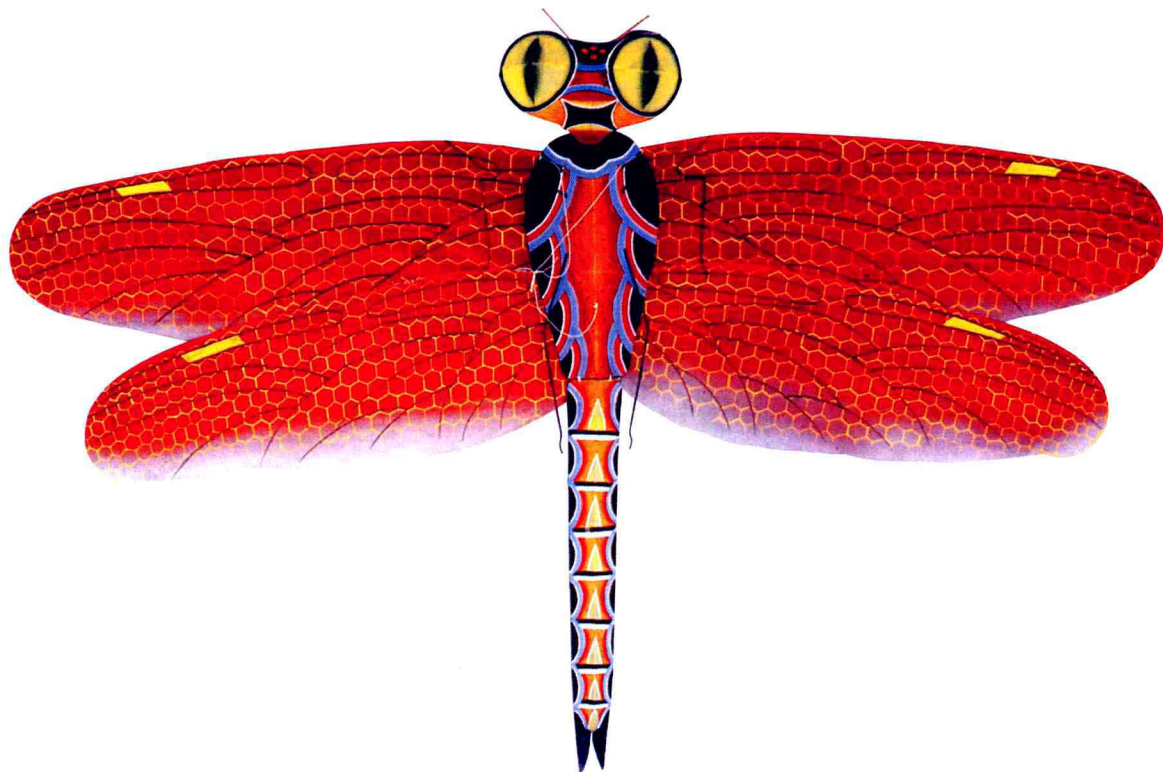




Yellow Dragonfly. Weifang.

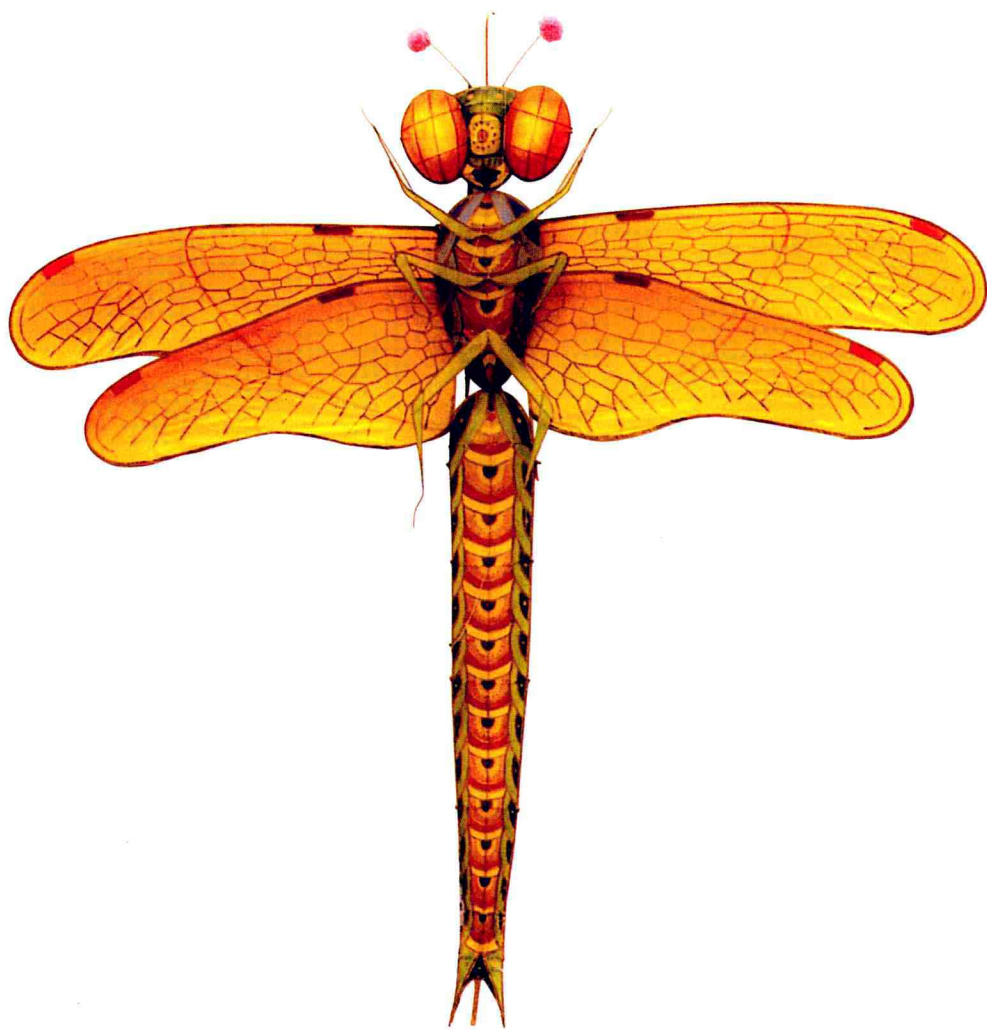


Green Dragonfly. Weifang.

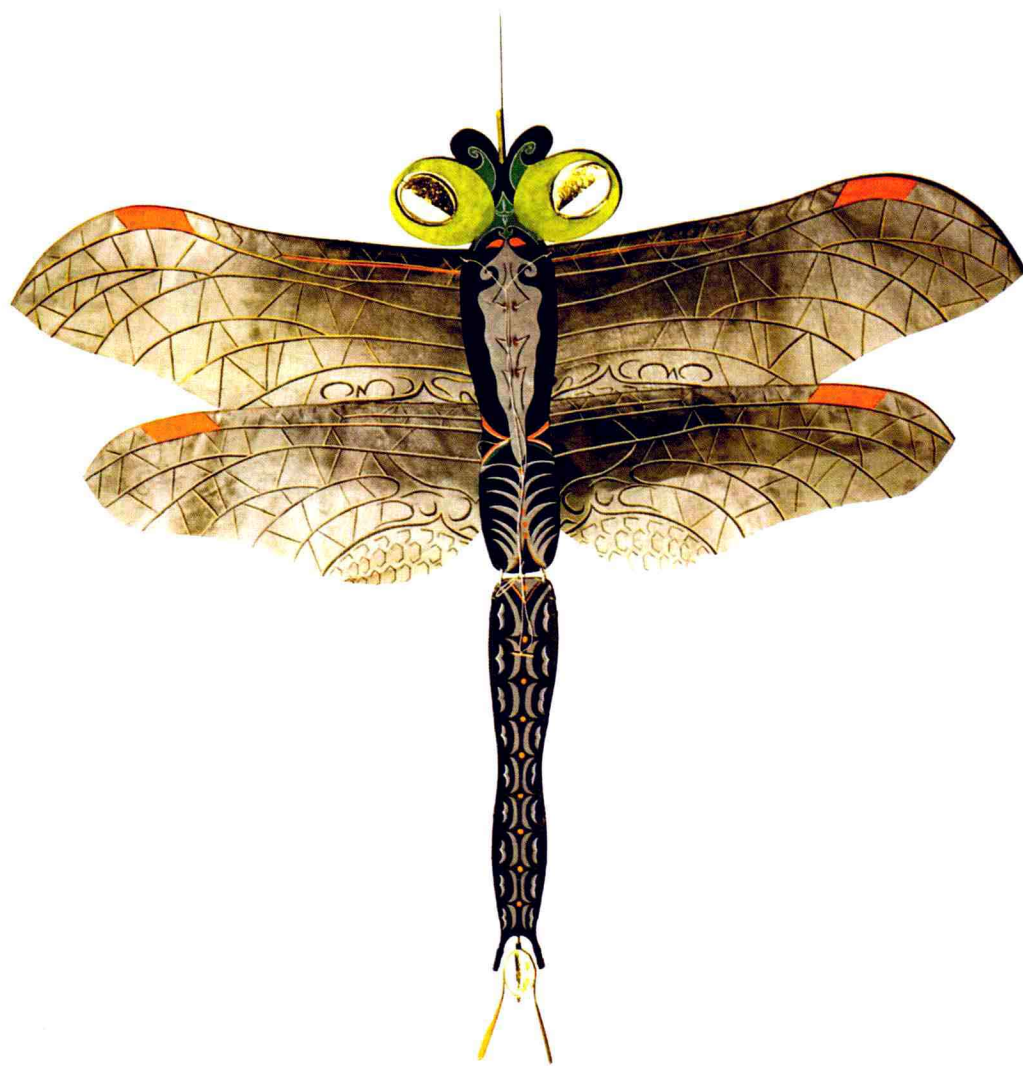


Red Dragonfly. Weifang.



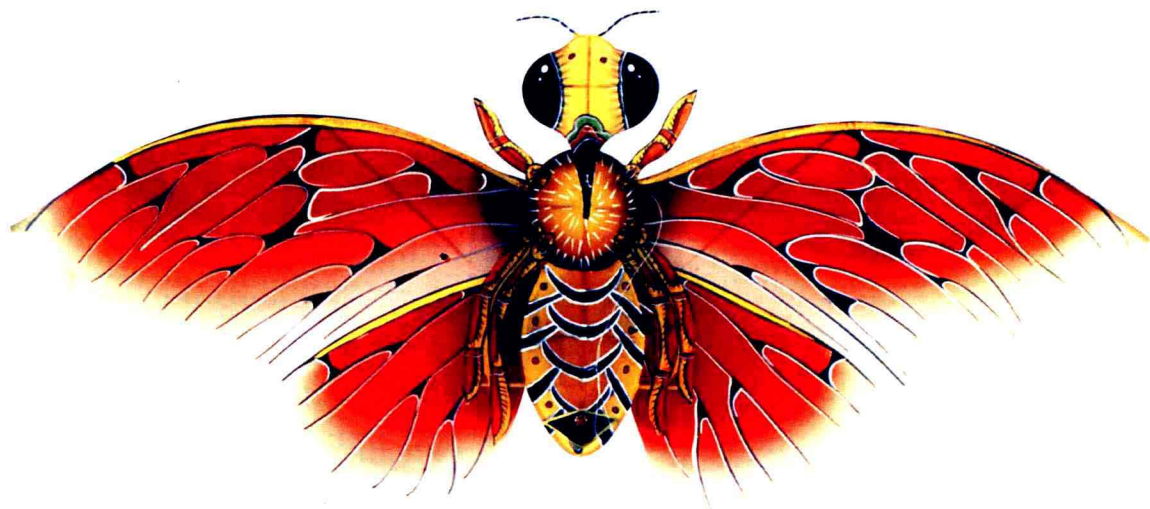


Yellow Dragonfly. Weifang.



Gray Dragonfly. Weifang.





Bee. Weifang.