

China major invention compass

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Introduction In the ancient era china has made many major developments and inventions. The most famous inventions are the Four Great Inventions. And one of the four great inventions is the compass. It was in the ancient era, during the Qin Dynasty (221-206BC), in 220BC when the first compasses were probably made. In this essay I will cover important points on the compass's history, which mainly involve its origins and how and why it was invented. This essay will also state the effects it has on people in the ancient era and how it has developed over the years and why it is considered such a great invention.

Origins of the Compass The compass originated in the Qin Dynasty. Apart from being a navigation tool throughout the centuries, it is also a form of art and expresses divine aspects. The spoon-shaped pointer was made of lodestone and from Wang Chong's (27- c. 100 AD) Lunheng, " This instrument resembles a spoon, and when it is placed on a plate on the ground, the handle points to the south. " The spoon represents the Great Bear. The square plate represents Earth and its round center represents Heaven. The plate bears Chinese Characters of the eight main directions-- North, South, East, West, North-East, South-East, South-West and North-West. The bonze plate also depicts designs like the Ten Heavenly Stems, Twelve Earthly Branches, and the four Divinatory Symbols. Such designs were carved on a rosewood platform and the intricate compass could be used as a decoration. Thus it is a unique form of art.

Reasons of This Invention There were three reasons the compass was used for and surprisingly, none of them had any relation with navigation. Chinese have a strong respect for their ancestors and belief in their traditions and the reasons of this invention revolved around these aspects. The divine symbols

on the bronze plate all came about because the compass was initially used for fortune telling in the 4th Century BC, the Taoist method of environmental organisations. Fortune tellers used compasses to construct their fortune telling boards. The second reason was for town planning and constructions of houses. The compass was used to ensure that houses and buildings faced a particular direction that was said to be in harmony with nature. This helped residents to feel peaceful as they found comfort in nature. The third was for geomancy, a method of divination by interpreting patterns. The compass was used to tell and determine the time and places of events like burial. This helped Chinese feel more bonded to their ancestors. Also, an encounter with divine forces, even if only imagined, can do wonders to people as our lives are all controlled by the way we think. Once we have faith in something, that helps to motivate us. How It Was Invented Based on its design and symbolic meaning, that the compass was originally used for fortune telling purposes. However, according to Daniel Boorstin in *The Discoverers*, the compass was also used and evolved from the game chess, where it was used to unravel the meaning of the universal forces, Yin and Yang. The ladle-like pointer was made in lodestone after the Chinese had found out of the material's seemingly mystical properties. It was during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476BC), while mining ores and melting copper and iron, that they chanced upon the natural magnetite. The " spoon" was spun around as a divine object according to the rules of the game. Later, the Chinese came to realization of the fact that the compass was better at pointing out real directions than using it for fortune telling or divine purposes. And thus the compass was formed for navigational purposes. How the Chinese Compass

Developed over the Years The Chinese compass has changed drastically over the years to become the compass that we now know. Many changes have been made to the original version of the compass in order to make it better, more convenient, and more suited for its purpose--to navigate. One of the changes is the materials they make use of. The Chinese compasses made use of lodestone, a natural mineral that attracts iron and other metals. Then, in the 8th century AD, Chinese scholars found a way to magnetise a needle. Following that, they suspended the needle in air by a thread or floated it in water. This turned out to be a much more lightweight and portable compass. Now, it has been replaced by a small magnetised piece of metal mounted on a pin and has many variations of sizes. Another change was its design. As mentioned in one of the above points, the bronze plate that the spoon was placed on depicted many divine features. All these features were carved onto a rosewood platform. Apart from being an ordinary compass, the Chinese compass can also be a beautiful piece of home décor and Feng Shui. This is what makes it such an elegant work of art--being able to engrave Chinese traditions and beliefs into their pieces of work. However now, the compasses that we see are just ordinary tools of navigations, without any trace of art mentioned earlier. Time has caused the compass to change from a spoon on a bronze plate with carvings to a small, portable tool. Of course, it is much more convenient to carry around nowadays but personally I think I would be nicer if we could bring some form of art into our busy lives.

Impacts on Ancient China The compass was a big invention back in the ancient era. It allowed people to accomplish tasks that were previously thought close to impossible. The compass opened up portals to a wider

range of oceans and allowed ships to travel through new and uncharted waters. According to Yuan Dynasty diplomat Zhou Daguan in *The Customs of Cambodia*, the first person to use the compass for navigation in the seas was him. He had described his voyage in the book, recording the when his ship set sail from Wenzhou; he had taken a needle direction of “ding wei” position (22. 5o South-West). Ships could sail as far as Suadi Arabia without getting lost in the vast seas. After being introduced to other countries, it also led to the discovery of many countries and the New World. This also increased the land area for more resources. It was also used for traditional purposes as mentioned earlier under the reasons of invention. The compass was used to determine time and places of burials and also used to ensure that houses faced a direction in harmony with nature. This helped strengthen the Chinese’s faith and belief in their tradition and culture. That was why the impact of the invention of compass was that great. Conclusion The main reason why the compass was such a great invention was because it helped us to broaden our knowledge of the world. Without the invention of a compass, our world might still be just a small cluster of islands, living in ignorance of other places. Without the compass, Singapore might not have existed in the people’s minds. Also, with the discovery of more countries came the increase in the diversity of cultures which eventually led to the multi-racial culture of Singapore. One thing that strikes me as the most intriguing was how they managed to create such an invention with beautiful touches of art and the Chinese culture. In a country where ancestors are deeply respected and people are strongly rooted in traditional beliefs, it is not hard to see why the compass was considered such a great invention and

important tool back in the ancient era and up till now. Reference List

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