

THE GOLDEN AGE OF MEDIEVAL CHINA

During the Tang (618 CE-907 CE) and Song Dynasties (960CE– 1279 CE) China became one of the richest, most advanced countries in the world. This era is called “the Golden Age” because China experienced a period of prosperity inspiring many new technological achievements. Like most periods of innovation, China’s success came as food



became more readily available to it’s people. A new fast-ripening rice, imported from neighboring Vietnam fueled a rise in food production. Farmers produced up to two to three times the amount

they could in the same amount of time it took to grow one traditional rice crop. Not surprisingly, this led to a rise in population. As the people China thrived, more attention was able to be focused on innovation.

The Tang and Song dynasties produced some of the most incredible inventions in human history, influencing the way things were done all over the world. One of the ways China influenced the world is by facilitating written communication. The invention of paper in the Han Dynasty (105 CE), coupled with the invention of woodblock printing allowed printed pages to be created quickly. Wood block printing is a form of printing that used wood to create carved pages that were be ink soaked and stamped. Later, in the Song dynasty,



the idea of moveable type would make it so individual characters could be arranged to make sentences. In this way, the

world’s first book was printed in China in the year 868 CE. Also during the Song dynasty, this same technology would be applied to make paper money, which enabled the Chinese to manage their growing wealth more conveniently. Europeans would adopt this technology making carrying money lighter and trading easier. Today, paper money is a standard across the world.

Gunpowder was another invention created

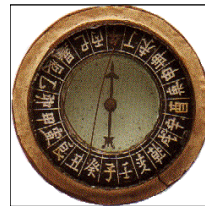
during the Tang dynasty. Originally gunpowder in China



was made by alchemists searching for a potion for immortality. Soon, they found the formula of made from mixture of saltpeter, sulfur, and charcoal that

could be used as an explosive propellant. Initially it was used for fireworks and rockets. Eventually, guns and cannons would be created by Europeans, which would change the way war would be conducted forever.

Perfected during the Tang dynasty, the magnetic compass would revolutionize the way



navigators traveled the world. The magnetic compass used the earth’s gravitational pull to show direction. Explorers all over would use this technology to navigate incredible

distances. The compass had a tremendous impact on how sea travel would be conducted and is responsible for some of the most successful sea voyages throughout history.

Luxury goods invented in China were demanded all over the world. First created in the Tang dynasty,



porcelain is a thin white pottery that was traded with Europe. The Chinese kept the production of porcelain secret so traders would be forced to trade with China. Although the soft cloth named silk was produced and traded

hundreds of years before the Tang and Song dynasties, it remained a vital key contributor to the wealth of China



during the Golden Age. Like porcelain, silk was a luxury good that was kept secret and was in high demand.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF KEY INVENTIONS CHART

	Date	Description	Impact
Porcelain	Late 700s	A white ceramic made of a clay and minerals only found in China.	China kept this technology secret so merchants had to trade with China in order to fill this highly demanded product. Today, people still call formal dishes "china" indicating that the Chinese created the most prestigious ceramics.
Printing	Wood block printing: 700s Movable type: 1040	Wood block printing was created from carved wood that would create a page "stamp" of text that could be duplicated. Later, this technology evolved into moveable type that allowed individual characters to be arranged and re-used in pages of text.	With this technology China was able to print the first book in 868 CE. It allowed written communication to be mass produced. Movable type was also developed later in Europe.
Gunpowder	800s	An explosive powdery material made from mixture of saltpeter, sulfur, and charcoal.	First used for fireworks and rockets, then weapons such as gun and cannons. Gunpowder would revolutionize the way wars were fought forever.
Paper money	1020s	Paper currency issued by Song used by merchants to make trade easier and manage wealth	Helped China to manage their growing wealth. Paper money would be adopted by Europeans. Today, most countries only deal in paper currency.
Magnetic Compass	1100s	Used the earth's magnetic pull to show direction on land for centuries before it was adapted by sailors for use at sea.	China become a sea power. Became a navigational tool in the west responsible for some of the most successful sea voyages in history.