

What does my Corvette's Carbon Fiber dashboard have to do with Marco Polo?

Not much actually. It was Marco Polo's father Niccolo Polo that made a discovery while living in what is now Turkey; that is behind this story. But nobody knows about Niccolo Polo, but most do know Marco, so that was the hook line in the title of this paper. The discovery that Niccolo made that is germane to this paper is "Flat Weave". This method of weaving is an art form making "Persian Rugs" and tapestries so popular. It is called "Flat Weave" because it's flat in every respect. Flat Weave is a unique textile technology that functions well in one very interesting aspect. It can round corners without distortion. Because most textile materials (threads) are round or oval, when those shaped threads are woven into a flat "cloth" there is a difficult problem in making it around a corner undistorted. The round individual fibers have a tendency to roll, when going around a corner. You cannot "round" a corner with normal textile materials without making a seam, relief cut / "gather" in the material. Niccolo noticed this unique characteristic of the "flat weave" while in Turkey. It was an important aspect of building his wealth in bringing this trade opportunity to Venice. And a life experience added to Marco Polo's education, motivating his trips to the Far East; essentially "Other cultures know how to do things" – so there it is; the only connection between Marco Polo and Carbon Fiber.

So, what has *that* got to do with the Carbon Fiber Dash in my C7 Corvette?

Starting with the C5 Z06 Corvette in 2001, customers who purchased those Corvettes very much took a liking to the use of Carbon Fiber in the manufacture of their cars. The strength and weight savings of Carbon Fiber really took off with the C6, but it was still basically a structural enhancement, and essentially used in flat, hidden locations. After market additions and other manufacturers built the desire for Carbon Fiber, and people wanted to SHOW it. So, Carbon Fiber started to get exposed, and it was thought to be attractive.

Knowing what could be done with Carbon Fiber, Dow Chemical Company went to the source of "Flat Weave". They went to Turkey a few centuries after Marco Polo did. In due course (actually 2012) Dow Chemical and a Turkish company by the name of AKKOK formed a joint company called DowAksa. The purpose of this company was to bring the "Flat-Weave" technology to the use of Carbon Fiber and the ability to make it around corners, in an attractive manner.

So, if you do some research (as I did) you will find that the Carbon Fiber Dash in the C7 Corvette is made by DowAksa in Yalova Turkey, which is not far from where Niccolo Polo lived. The "modern" technology of the C7's Factory installed Carbon Fiber Dash comes from the textile discovery made by a western European in the mid 1200's.



My thanks to the craftsmen at Chevrolet, who are behind my getting this "Modern" technology in my C7. It's an option with a little bit of History behind it. And if I had gotten it with the original order – I would never have known.