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It is admitted that spectacles were in use in China well before they were known and used in Western countries. These spectacles turned out to be planar without focusing properties. The purpose was mainly cosmetic.

The first chronicle relating the use of an optical component for improving human eyesight is due to Pliny the Elder<sup>1</sup> who wrote in 23-79 A.D. that : "emeralds are usually concave so that they may concentrate the visual rays. The Emperor Nero used to watch in an emerald the gladiatorial combats". That is the first description of the use of a piece of a transparent material as a monode for correcting short-sightedness.

There is very little evidence of the use of lenses in Antiquity. The *Lensard lens* discovered in Nimroud (Neoassyrian city) dated to 721-705 B.C. and often cited as the first case of convex lens is probably a mere piece of jewellery.

However, a well-known example of light ray focusing, not directly connected with imaging, are the famous burning-mirrors invented by Archimedes<sup>1</sup> for the defence of Syracuse.

The physical mechanisms describing the capacity of glass to bend light