1 Discovering the East and the establishment of colonies in Southeast Asia

The Age of Exploration is the period of exploration between the 15th and 17th century. Ship building and navigation technologies had been developing rapidly in Europe. These developments helped Europeans sail to the Far East.

Write down some of the similarities and differences in the designs of these model ships


Based on your answers in the previous question, explain the development of European ship building technology in that period.


To what extent do these models explain the expansion of European colonies in the Far East? Answer the questions using the captions for these models and your own knowledge.


Are there any objects in the showcase where these models are exhibited which reflect the expansion of European colonies in Southeast Asia?
Foreign trade in the Far East

European countries developed trade with many states in the East but their main focus was China. Chinese produced goods such as teas, silk and porcelain which had a huge market in Europe.

Look at the Chinese made goods, are they made for China’s internal market? Explain your answer through the appearance and the patterns on them.

Now look at the porcelain. Are Chinese goods hard for Europeans to copy? Explain your answer through comparison between these porcelain pieces and the European porcelain. Is there any difference?

By looking at this model can you tell why clippers were designed especially for transporting tea from China to Europe. Why did they need to be specially built? How does the clipper's design reflect the value of tea in Europe in the early 19th century.

This tea caddy also reflects the value of tea in 19th century Europe. What evidence can you find from this caddy?
Middlemen in the trade

Before the outbreak of the First Opium War, foreign trade in China was restricted to Canton from 1757. Trade was conducted through middlemen, the Hong merchants.

Who owned these weapons?

Why did their users need them?

What is the name of the company which employed them?

Who is this man? What was his career? How did he become one of the richest men in the world in the 1830s?

In the view of the Qing government and Chinese culture, why did Hong merchants exist?
East-West Conflict

Although the Chinese had traded with Europeans since the Ming dynasty, the way of conducting trade and the laws were different between East and West. Tensions from these differences increased. These increasing tensions and the import of large amounts of Opium to China, eventually led to outbreak of the First Opium War.

These 2 fans show a view of the 13 foreign factories in Canton. What do these 2 fans tell you about the limitations on European merchants in China imposed by the Qing government?

Look at this oil painting, which party dominated this court? Qing officers or the European merchants?

Can you tell whether the Europeans trusted Chinese law? Answer the question through the information given in the painting.

Do you know why?
Responses from the East

The First Opium War showed that China could not resist challenges from the West. Following the Second Opium War, open-minded officers in the Qing government realized the urgent need for reformation. This reform was called China’s Self Strengthening Movement (SSM).

What was the focus of the reforms according to this painting?

Does it provide you with enough information for a full picture of the reforms?

SSM’s first military challenge came from France who had colonial ambitions. Can you find out what was the result through studying this wood block print?

Look at the comments on this wood block print. Did the general public in China at that period have faith in SSM after the challenge from France?

Japan also had colonial ambitions in Taiwan and Korea. Encountering challenges from the West, both China and Japan had their own response. Which nation was more successful? Explain your answer using these engravings.