

**Constructing Chinese Cosmopolitanism: Southeast Asia,  
Overseas Chinese, and Xiamen, 1842-1937**

by

**James A. Cook, Ph.D.**

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**4:30 - 6:00 pm**

**Center for Korean Studies (CKS) Auditorium**



Panoramic photograph of Xiamen, circa 1880.

Located on China's southeast coast, the city of Xiamen had long stood as one of the poles of the Overseas Chinese universe; local merchants had already established a well-defined trading network as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and over 2 million people departed from the city for Southeast Asia over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The global scope of Xiamen's merchants and their trading networks, the people's historical roots in diaspora and international commerce, and the distinctive nature of overseas "Chineseness" combined to produce a new narrative of community and development. In many ways Xiamen's Overseas Chinese became "bridges to modernity" that moved into and out of China. Time abroad within the modernizing confines of colonial Southeast Asia led many returned-émigrés to feel that they alone understood the process of modernization and how to create a truly Chinese modernity. Ultimately their new discourse of modernization was constructed around the commercial wealth of overseas Chinese merchant life, integrated with a revamped Confucianism and a newly discovered historical tradition.



Dr. Cook is 2013-2014 Arthur Lynn Andrews Chair in Asian and Pacific Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, School of Pacific and Asian Studies and Associate Director of the Asian Studies Center at the University of Pittsburgh. His research interests include the impact of Overseas Chinese on the development of modern China and the environmental history of northwestern China.

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