

# Settler Sovereignty in Singapore and Bathurst in the 1820s

Wednesday 6 May 2020 4:15–5:00pm

School of History Zoom Seminar Series  
Speaker: Gareth Knapman (ANU)

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Statue of Sir Stamford  
Raffles, Singapore

Singapore was founded as a British settlement in 1819 and the settlement underwent an overwhelming growth in settlement expansion. New South Wales, founded in 1788, was, by the early 1820s, expanding past the Blue Mountains into the Wiradjuri territory of central New South Wales. In Singapore, before 1823, responsibility for the administration of justice was divided between British law (for Europeans and Indians) and Malay law (for Malays and Chinese). Similarly, in New South Wales, before 1827, the government saw Aboriginal people as an independent people living subject to their own laws and not bound by British law. Both colonies were expanding settlements in which moneyed interests and non-traditional owners of land demanded the colonial government favour their needs at the expense of traditional owners. Consequently, in both settlements, the colonial governments worked to end the legal pluralism that had previously existed by subsuming Malay/Aboriginal peoples within the colonial state. This paper compares the demands for ending Malay sovereignty in Singapore with demands within NSW to include Aboriginal people under British law.



**Dr Gareth Knapman** is a Research Associate with the Australian National University specialising in nineteenth century Southeast Asia and Australia. Gareth's current research explores the idea of land ownership and Indigenous sovereignty in eighteenth and nineteenth India, Southeast Asia and Australia. His recent books, *Race and British Colonialism in Southeast Asia* (Routledge, 2017), and *Liberalism and the British Empire in Southeast Asia* (Routledge, 2019) that he co-edited with Mary Quilty and Anthony Milner have jointly created a new understanding of colonial Southeast Asia.