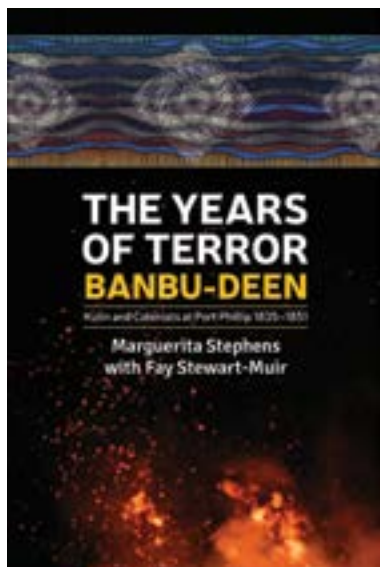


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## The Years of Terror: Banbu-deen: Kulin and Colonists at Port Phillip 1835–1851

By Marguerita Stephens with Fay Stewart-Muir

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*The Years of Terror: Banbu-Deen* by historian Marguerita Stephens with Boonwurrung elder and language specialist Fay Stewart-Muir explores the history of cross-cultural interaction between the Indigenous Kulin peoples and the invading colonists at Port Phillip from 1835 to 1851. This brilliant work draws upon the records of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate (1839–1849), particularly the extensive daily writings of Assistant Protector William Thomas (1793–1867), and builds upon Stephens' previous work on Thomas' journals.<sup>1</sup>

The book, written as a narrative history, focuses on the clans and nations of the Kulin confederacy surrounding Melbourne, predominately the Woiwurrung and Boonwurrung peoples with whom Thomas worked most closely. This book, meticulously written and bursting with detail, speaks to the complex social, cultural and political lives of the Kulin peoples and their resistance and agency in interactions with colonists during these 'years of dispossession, terror and death' (p.xi).

The book is a terrific resource for teachers wishing to gain more depth on various historical events and places during this period, from the Batman Treaty, Kulin politics, resistance and agency to dispossession and frontier warfare. The book tells the stories of Kulin individuals from the 1830s to 1850s who have mostly been written about with little detail or left out of previous history works. Throughout the pages individuals such as Billibellary (Woiwurrung) and Deremut (Boonwurrung) are brought to the forefront, but most importantly also lesser-known individuals such as Ninggollobin (Woiwurrung), Myngderrar Malcolm (Woiwurrung), Bollut King Benbow (Boonwurrung) and more. Also highlighted within

the book are Kulin women, such as Deremut's mother Dindo and Billibellary's eldest daughter Wigal, who have often been omitted or scarcely recorded in the colonial archive, and subsequently in history writing, due to their gender.

The book is also a great resource in the discussion of historiography and primary resources, as there are issues and gaps with the writings of European observers. For example, while Thomas struggled to understand the rich and complex social, political and cultural lives of the Kulin, at times his recordings were deliberately misleading or self-serving. Such factors can make historical analysis challenging but also necessary when drawing upon these sources.

My only significant issue with the book is its map of Port Phillip showing Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung Country (pp. 227–231). I would advise teachers to steer away from using it in class. The section labelled 'Woiwurrung' on the map only covers the Country of the Wurundjeri people, and only one Woiwurrung clan, failing to illustrate the western Woiwurrung clans that stretch to the Werribee River. The map also does not correlate with the authors' own descriptions of the geography of Woiwurrung and Boonwurrung Country (p.6).

This aside, I cannot recommend this book enough. It is a fresh and valuable resource about Victoria's Indigenous and colonial frontier history for teachers, researchers, the Kulin community, and anyone interested in this period and region.

<sup>1</sup> Marguerita Stephens (ed.), *The Journal of William Thomas, Assistant Protector of the Aborigines of Port Phillip & Guardian of the Aborigines of Victoria: 1839–1867* (Melbourne: Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, 2014).