HISTORICAL ATLASES, conceived as an aid to the study of ages past, first appeared in sixteenth-century Europe, but it was not until the twentieth century that any were devoted exclusively to southern Africa or Australia. That does not mean, however, that history was absent from maps. The previous chapter shows how nineteenth-century maps of South Africa sometimes wittingly and sometimes inadvertently represented events and peoples from the past alongside data from the present. Even Australian maps, which seem much less interested in history, would occasionally represent historical material, such as the routes taken by exploring expeditions in previous decades.

James Wyld’s 1844 map of South Africa fairly bursts with historical information. A ‘Ficanis & Colon. Troops’ of 1818 is shown, along with the site of battles that same year between ‘Ficanis & Colon. Troops’. The route taken by Methodist missionary James Archbell in 1829 on his journey to the central highveld is shown by a dotted line. Capital letters A, B, and D refer to districts involved in the frontier war of 1835–36 and its aftermath, including the District of Natal occupied by Boer ‘Emigrants from the Cape Colony’ in the years 1836–38.

Interesting as they are, these snippets of information lack the shaping intellect of a historical atlas. That sort of thinking emerged first in the cogitations of a self-taught geologist, George W. Stow, who evolved extraordinary—mainly fallacious—theories about the peopling of South Africa and its recent history while conducting mineral
Detail from 'South Africa' by James Wyld, London, c.1844, showing incidents in conflict between the Zulu kingdom and the Boers.
surveys on the highveld from the back of his peripatetic ox wagon. After his death, thanks to the assistance of the historian George M. Theal, Stow’s map reached a wider public, which ensured that it exercised a continuing influence on the writing of South African history. Although Australian historical maps have been made, none approached the power and complexity of Stow’s effort. As one early twentieth-century preface to a school atlas remarked, quoting Gibbon, ‘Happy is the country that has no history. Apart from the Maori wars in New Zealand, the only noteworthy features of the history of Australasia are the dates of the successive settlements, and the chief stages in the exploration of the region.’

Stow’s Map

Stow’s map is titled ‘Sketch Map of Central and Southern Africa, Showing the Main Lines of Migration Followed by the Various Races Now Inhabiting the Southern Portion of the Continent’. A reviewer of the first edition remarked on the map as ‘an especially valuable feature...which, if criticisable in detail, is none the less of the highest importance.’ Thanks to its streams of vivid colour it creates a striking impression even when reduced to the size of a page in this book. Amid the pastel ribbons flowing south, an inky black, squid-like configuration of lines seems to float ominously upwards from the lower-right section.

The map’s legend is equally intriguing. Every group in southern Africa is portrayed as having originally arrived there through a process of migration from the north. The left-hand column lists those whom Stow believed to be the first arrivals: the Bushmen, divided into ‘Painter Tribes’ in yellow and ‘Sculptor Tribes’ in tawny ribbons. Next come the Hottentots, whose supposed line of migration is shown in a stream running southwest from Lake Victoria before turning south along the Atlantic coast. In the right-hand column Stow places all the Bantu tribes. These, in turn, are divided into three broad groups: western tribes, tribes whose names begin with the ‘Ba’ prefix and those whose names have the ‘Ama’ prefix. On the map, each of these groups is shown flowing along narrow dark lines of colour: blue, orange and magenta. At the bottom of the legend appear other arrivals: Europeans (including Phoenicians!) and ‘Mixed breeds’.

Stories on the Map

Only part of Stowe’s huge manuscript on South African History found its way into print, and that happened more than twenty years after his death in 1882. The book, published as The Native Races of South Africa in 1905, deals mainly with the people he called the Bushmen and Hottentots. Less than one hundred pages concern the largest population

group, the speakers of Bantu languages, and those end abruptly in the 1820s. The fold-out map at the back of the book was clearly intended to accompany the larger work. Seldom has a map-maker attempted to pack more history on to a single image. By Stow's own calculation his scope extends over several thousand years. In addition to lines and bands of colour, he marshals words, dotted lines, numbers and a score of arrows to tell not one but a series of stories.
The most arresting features of the work are the discreteness of the population groups depicted and their incessant movement. Everyone belongs to a group and every group is on the move; no one is shown at rest. Stow also deploys colour to great effect. The broad swaths of yellow and orange suggest a huge realm for the two divisions of Bushmen. Blue is equally important, but the march of what Stow calls the 'western tribes' of the 'Bantu group' stops well short of the northern borders of the areas later colonised by the Dutch and British. Apart from the magenta stream of the 'Ama-prefix' groups along the Indian Ocean coast and the ominous burst of black in the lower centre, Stow uses narrow coloured lines to represent what emerged as the largest population group in South Africa. And the most formidable of recent invaders—the Dutch and British—are shown by variations on the theme of dotted lines. All these features suggest that this map is ideologically loaded, an inference borne out by Stow's published and unpublished writings.

His primary objective in the published book is to prove the 'great antiquity of the Bushmen in South Africa', whom he believed must have arrived thousands of years ahead of any other race.a Next came what Stow calls the 'Hottentot hordes', whom he believed commenced their drive down the west coast 'about the end of the fourteenth century.' Departing from the conventional view that Bushmen 'savages' stood lowest on the human totem pole, Stow goes out of his way to enumerate their merits, as one might guess from the map's depiction of them as painters and sculptors. He denied that they lacked government, believing they formed organised tribes. Neither were they primitive, Stow insisted, citing their facility for myth-making as a skill superior to those of the Bantu tribes, who were 'merely addicted to ancestor-worship.'a

Stow's second large theme in the published book is that successive waves of newly arrived 'stronger races' overran and terrorised the original inhabitants of the land. The underlying proposition is that all group movements, except perhaps those of the Dutch and English, were driven by the aggression of people pushing them from the rear:

We find from South African evidence, that after the original Bushman migration, the Hottentot tribes, at a comparatively recent period, were the first to follow them. These people were themselves driven from the more central portions of the continent by another race still stronger than themselves.a
So convinced of this was Stow that he describes the Hottentots not as advancing, but as having 'retreated in a southwesterly direction, until arrested by the Atlantic, when they turned towards the south.' The fearsome race supposedly driving them on proves to be the Bantu, who are portrayed as having arrived very late in the day. As late as the dawn of the nineteenth century, Stow asserts, no 'Bachoana' had penetrated south of Kuruman (19 on the list of numbered 'localities'). This assertion of recent arrival is further emphasised by Stow's presentation of each line of Bantu migration as the movement of a single tribe. Thus, the Barolong, Bahurutsi, Batlapin, Baputri and other groups known to the historic record in the nineteenth century are shown to be moving as discrete units (see Chapter 4).

Stow's text confirms his belief that all of them had come from long ago and far away, while preserving their original identity. Take, for example, his account of the people called Rolong, BaRolong or Barolong:

The name of the great ancestor of their chiefs, Noto, the Hammer for Iron, seems to demonstrate the antiquity of their previous appellation, and as they state that he lived very far to the north, the fact of the eighteen generations which would have intervened between his days and our own would prove, if we calculate...each generation at a probable length of thirty-five years, that he must have lived some time in the thirteenth century, and certainly, if we take the shorter calculation of thirty years, not later than the early portion of the fourteenth and therefore when, according to their own tribal traditions, as well as those of the other races we have already investigated, they must have lived not only very far to the north, but also, in all probability, before their ancestors had arrived as far south as the intralacustrine region then occupied by the forefathers of the present Hottentots of South Africa."

The most dramatic story suggested by the map barely figures in Stow's book: the ominous black hydra-headed spectre in the lower-centre portion of the map, and the long black ribbon that runs northward along the Mozambique coast before turning inland and terminating in a huge loop just below Lake Victoria. The hydra-headed figure, as the wording alongside makes plain, depicts the movements of Moselekatase and his Matabili. These are the same chief and people encountered in a previous chapter of this book as Mzikazi and his 'Zulu' people, who were called Matabele by the Tswana-speakers of the interior. The second ribbon, streaming north towards the African great lakes, purports to show the 'Line of March of the Watuta or Northern Zulu.' The 'Matabili legions' step on stage very late (on page 547) and the so-called Watuta do not appear at all. Based on the map alone, any reader might conclude that huge numbers must have been involved in these movements. This is far from certain: a visitor to Mzikazi's capital in 1836 believed that the total male population of the kingdom between the ages of
fifteen and sixty numbered no more than 4,000. Although no one can be sure of the numbers involved, it is likely that the immigrant groups from southeastern Africa that founded the central African kingdoms were quite small.

Part of the compelling power of the map lies precisely in its ability to distort the magnitude of movements and events through the width of the watercolour swatches employed. The path taken by the 'Emigrant Boers', whose 'Great Trek' looms so large in twentieth-century histories of South Africa, appears on Stow's map as an insignificant line (x--x--x). And the arrival of British settlers in their tens of thousands is not shown on land, but merely by a procession of lines (o--o--o) moving by sea into the harbours of Cape Town, Algoa Bay and Port Natal.

The Map and Historical Atlases

By the time Stow's book appeared in 1905 historical atlases were so sophisticated in their use of line and colour that it might be reasonable to ask whether the map was his own. Does the date 1880 in the bottom-right corner refer merely to Stow's conception, or was the map all his work? A clear-cut answer depends on establishing its provenance. Fortunately, a clear path can be traced from the publisher, Sonnenschein, back to Stow. According to George Theal's preface, the manuscript was purchased from Stow's widow by Lucy Lloyd soon after the author's death from a heart attack on 16 March 1882. Theal, however, does not specifically mention the map. The unmarried daughter of an Anglican clergyman, Lloyd had made a career out of championing the work of her brother-in-law, Wilhelm Bleek, the pioneering linguist who coined the word 'Bantu' to describe the language group. Lucy Lloyd's own papers include letters from Stow's third wife and widow, Fanny, that confirm the transaction as well as her efforts to get the manuscript taken up by the publisher John Murray in London.24 Twenty-two years later Lloyd still had the manuscript, as is attested by a letter from Theal offering his help in putting it in the hands of the Sonnenschein firm, which had published some of his own books.15

In some circumstances that might have been the end of the manuscript, and indeed the manuscript form of much of what was published in Native Races seems to have disappeared. Not the original map, however, for it made its way to the National Library of Cape Town as a gift from Lucy Lloyd's niece, Dorothea Bleek, in 1914. That Stow constructed his own map bearing the date 1880 can also be demonstrated by stylistic evidence, which will be considered shortly. A prior question, however, is from whence he might have derived his inspiration for presenting migrations with coloured ribbons and arrows.

One clue is a lecture Stow presented in the 1850s on 'The Causes of the Fall of Ancient Empires', which ruminated on the possibility that 'another deluge of barbarians' might
destroy Western civilisation. As Walter Goffart’s recent study demonstrates, historical atlases depicting the ancient world were the first to use arrows in this fashion, employing them to represent the flow of the barbarians into the Roman Empire. Jeremy Black cites Edward Gover’s Historic Geographical Atlas of the Middle and Modern Ages (1853) for its use of colour to show ‘The tribes of particular races, as the Germanic, the Hunnish [sic], the Mongol, and the Turkish’. However, Gover’s modest pastels are a far cry from Stow’s lurid tints.

Much closer in spirit is the gaily coloured map devised to illustrate barbarian invasions for the Genealogical, Historical, and Geographical Atlas by ‘Le Sage’ (1801). Marin Joseph Emmanuel August Dieudonné de Las Cases, Marquis of Caussade, who published his historical atlas under the pseudonym of A. Le Sage, became well known to the British world for his memoir of Napoleon on St Helena. His historical atlas was translated into English almost immediately after its first appearance in French as Atlas historique et
géographique, also in 1801. According to Walter Goffart, who has ansacked the archives of Europe and North America in search of barbarian invasion maps, this was 'The most original, and enduring' treatment of the subject. Contemporaries hailed its ribbons as 'a breakthrough in historical mapping.'

'The Transmigration' map,' Goffart wrote, 'has been often applauded and sometimes deplored. Either way, it has proved exceptionally powerful. The barbarians of late antiquity haunted the European historical imagination.' They also haunted the imagination of George Stow, as shown by his lecture on the fall of ancient empires. Although it is impossible to say whether he had seen any visual presentations of the barbarian invasions, none comes as close to his own methodology as that of Las Cases. Stow went on to surpass all predecessors in his astonishing production of 1880, for reasons that have to do with his environment, talents, training and ferocious ideological commitment.

Artist and Geologist

George W. Stow, the eldest son of a manufacturer, was born at Nuneaton, Warwickshire, in 1822 and was articled to a London doctor for five years before throwing over the study of medicine and emigrating to South Africa in 1843. After flirting with the idea of taking holy orders, he eventually found employment as a bookkeeper. His great passion, however, was fossil hunting. At first he interpreted the evidence he found of extinct animals in orthodox terms, as the bones of creatures that failed to board Noah's Ark at the time of the Deluge. After further study, however, he aligned himself with the emerging theory of evolution, which owed much to the geological work of Charles Lyell.

Stow's published papers finally enabled him to secure full-time work as a geologist, employed largely in surveys of the Kimberley diamond-mining region and the Orange Free State. From the time of his first forays as a fossil hunter, Stow had made sketches of his finds; later he developed his artistic skills by learning to paint in watercolour. Stow also employed these talents in drawings of geological strata, some of which strongly suggest the long ribbons of colour used in his migration map—especially the long stretches of lines separating the various strata.
Apologist for White Settlement

The darker side of Stow's work related to maps of barbarian invasions. For him, the analogy between the barbarian invasions of the Roman Empire and the barbarian invasions of the Bantu-speaking peoples was ever-present. And as far as he was concerned, he knew his barbarians at first hand. Within a few years of his arrival in South Africa, Stow had volunteered to serve with the British forces in the so-called War of the Axe, one of a series of frontier conflicts with Xhosa people that have been termed South Africa's Hundred Years War.28 In the next war of 1850–53 Stow was once again at the front, during which time he composed an epic poem on 'Barbarism and Prejudice'.29 From Stow's perspective, barbarism was represented by the 'aggressions' of the Xhosa and prejudice by the deluded missionaries whose propaganda led people in Britain to believe that the white settlers had provoked frontier conflict. What most rankled with him was the frequent assertion that the Xhosa were the original possessors of the land:

[The missionaries] gave such a biased and distorted description as to render their evidence so untrustworthy as to be perfectly valueless in carrying out any impartial philosophical or ethnological inquiry.
The simple fact that certain tribes were found occupying some given tract of country at the
time of the missionary’s arrival was, of itself, without further question, deemed irrefragable
proof that these particular natives must have been its rightful owners from time immemorial.
Thus erroneous statements and unfounded claims were not only promulgated, but upheld
with a holy fervour... The white nations were looked upon, and spoken of, as the only
intruders into the ancient domains of the ‘poor natives’, and the only race which had trodden
under foot, with a remorselessness and cruelty deserving universal execration, the rights of the
ill-treated aborigines.

These views clearly align Stow with the most enduring legend of white settler history:
that innocent colonists who fought in self-defence against an unprovoked Xhosa attack
had their interests betrayed by Britain’s Colonial Office, which had fallen under the
malign influence of missionary ‘Negrophile’ propaganda.

It is difficult to say when Stow first conceived the strategy of countering missionary
protests about the dispossession of the Xhosa through the argument that the Xhosa and
the other Bantu-speaking groups had themselves dispossessed and nearly annihilated
the true owners of the land—the Bushmen. In 1878 he recalled having seen his first
Bushman cave in 1866. Certainly by 1867 he had become sufficiently interested to
begin a systematic collection of Bushmen rock paintings, using his artistic skills to colour
the tracings taken during his geological expeditions. Sometime in the early 1870s his
work attracted the attention of Wilhelm Bleek, who had left behind his earlier work on
Bantu languages in favour of studies of Bushmen languages and mythology. Not long
afterwards their correspondence was cut short by Bleek’s sudden death in August 1875,
an event Stow heard of through a letter from Bleek’s sister-in-law, Lucy Lloyd. Stow
replied, expressing shock at the death of ‘my dear friend Dr Bleek. Although I had not the
pleasure of ever meeting Dr Bleek personally still I have ever looked upon him... as one
of my best friends’. Encouraged by Lloyd, Stow took up a correspondence with her that
began more or less where he had left off with Bleek. It reveals a great deal about his
method. He told Lloyd that lately he had been acquiring valuable information:

Several old bushmen—one a most ancient looking one—the representative of a race of old
Bushmen Captains—with a pedigree of five generations. When he was only a boy, the bushmen
(of his part of the country) believed that the bushmen were the only race of men on the earth.
He never saw any other until he was a young man, when the Corannas made their appearance.
[Stow’s emphasis]

That is to say, Stow constructed his vision of the past from oral history casually
collected from people he happened to encounter on his journeys across a single region:
the western highveld. In October 1878 he told Lloyd, 'Wherever I go, whenever I hear, of an old native, bushman, Basuto or Zulu, I send for him to my camp, and after explaining to him my motive for doing so, obtain from him all the information I can upon every point of interest. The last eighteen months have added greatly to the amount of information from this source.' Two years later he reported that 'after much writing, I at length succeeded in arousing an interest in some of the old missionaries, and even two or three of the old chiefs from whom I have been able to collect a large amount of new and valuable information.' Whenever his randomly collected interviews contained stories of migrations from the north, Stow carefully noted them.

Though he lacked access to archaeological data or any system of dating such as the radiocarbon technology that has revolutionised prehistory since the 1960s, Stow believed he could determine the dates at which successive waves of Bantu-speaking immigrants arrived in South Africa. How could Stow put so much faith in a dubious research methodology that depended on questions put to a few score living people interviewed with the help of servants whom he employed as interpreters? His surviving letters and manuscripts give few clues. However, it might be surmised that he drew confidence from the new geological theories that had revolutionised scholarship in general and had put him in contact with celebrated scientists such as Thomas Huxley. Having been elected a Fellow of the Geological Society of London on the basis of his self-taught fossil research, and a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society on the basis of his surveys, Stow was convinced of his ability to master any subject.

Though much of his life consisted of lonely journeys on the veld, away from family and friends, Stow had made valuable contacts along the way. He had become acquainted with members of the accomplished Orpen family during his early years in Grahamstown; later he worked with both J. M. and F. H. Orpen on survey work in Griqualand West, and Charles Sirr Orpen, a Bloemfontein attorney, was his literary executor. Through other channels he had met Theophilus Shepstone, Natal's innovative Secretary for Native Affairs, whom he counted as an 'old friend'. It may have been through Shepstone that Stow became aware of the revolutionary biblical criticism promoted by J. W. Colenso, Bishop of Natal. At any rate, by 1872 Stow was said to hold 'advanced views' on biblical accounts of creation.

It was understandable that Stow should feel entitled to speculate on human origins because thinking about human development had, in his time, been profoundly influenced by geology. As Ian Keen observes:

Geological metaphors abound in nineteenth century anthropological writing. This should occasion us no surprise, for geology (or 'mineralogy') as it was a key science in the development of evolutionist ideas which united the earth sciences, biology, and anthropology. It was geology that established a deep history of the earth and its life-forms; geology and
paleontology that provided the bases for conceptions of both an orderly succession and the evolution of species.\(^8\)

About the time Stow began his historical survey of South African tribal origins and migrations, the influential American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan made this argument:

Like the successive geological formations, the tribes of mankind may be arranged, according to their relative conditions, into successive strata. When thus arranged, they reveal with some degree of certainty the entire range of human progress from savagery to civilization. A thorough study of each successive stratum will develop whatever is special in its culture and characteristics and yield a definite conception of the whole, in their difference and their relations.\(^9\)

There could hardly have been a more literal realisation of Morgan's simile than Stow's map. The lines of migration stream down the African continent like the strata in his geological sketches. His inspired use of colour enables the adjacent ribbons to be read as temporal layers: first the Bushmen, then the Hottentots, then the Bantu.

As he fulsomely acknowledged, much of the impetus for Stow's theorising came from Bleek. As early as 1871 Bleek had drawn attention to "The three distinct races of men (and families of language) extant in South Africa; viz. the Bantu, the Hottentot and the Bushmen."\(^10\) Lacking any linguistic expertise of his own, Stow simply borrowed Bleek's classifications as set out in the *Comparative Grammar of South African Languages* (1862). He also more or less followed Bleek in assigning a northern African origin to the Hottentots. However, whereas Bleek had maintained that the Hottentots were the original inhabitants of the northeastern part of South Africa,\(^11\) Stow consigns them to the southeastern corner of the continent after their arrival a few thousand years before. This leaves the rest of the land to the Bushmen, whom he romanticises to a degree far beyond anything imagined by Bleek.

For Stow the latest manifestation of the 'Hottentot race' was the Griqua of the western highveld, whose forbears had fled the advancing frontier of early Dutch settlement in the Western Cape region in the eighteenth century. In Stow's eyes 'The Grijus as a race, although some are possessed of a certain smattering of rude elementary knowledge are the most despicable set of natives I have ever come in contact with.' He attributed their faults almost entirely to the agents of the London Missionary Society who had converted them to Christianity—the same society he blamed for betraying the cause of white settlers during the 1834–35 frontier war. In an article for the *Cape Monthly Magazine* he argued that the results of missionary effort among the Griquas demonstrated "The folly of teaching a barbarian race confused ideas of equality and Christianity without
impressing upon its members the necessity of cultivating habits of industry and the arts of civilisation.\textsuperscript{35} As the driving force behind Stow's history was exposing the errors and falsehoods of missionaries and philanthropists, the Griqua did not make very satisfactory victims of the 'stronger' Bantu races. That role he reserved for the Bushmen.

As South African historian Andrew Bank has demonstrated, Wilhelm Bleek's interest in the Bushmen arose from his early conviction that they represented the lowest type of humankind, a theory he attempted to test by measurements of skulls and comparison of their dialects with the vocalisations of great apes.\textsuperscript{36} From the outset of his historical work Stow took a far more favourable view. In a letter to Lucy Lloyd dated 31 August 1878 he set forth the outline of the book he proposed to write:

1. Evidence as to the climatal [sic] condition of the Northern and Southern Hemisphere, prior to the European Cave Men.
2. The Last Glacial Epoch of the Northern Hemisphere and its natural consequences.
3. The Evidences of a great Migration: Is it to the Northward or Southward?
4. The state of South Africa in Pliocene, Post-Pliocene, Quaternary and Recent times.
5. The wide-extended Bushman occupation of the Southern portion of the African Continent.
6. What probable, or positive traces are there of a Bushman Migration from the North:
   (a) Has he left any recognizable trail?
   (b) Is there any similarity of weapons or implements?
   (c) Or affinity of Language, as per Dr Bleek?
7. The probable condition of the Bushman in his undisturbed state—and his traditions of an earlier race.
8. The encroachments of the stronger races upon the Bushman Hunting Grounds—shewing the probable migration of the various races.
   1) The Hottentot and Korana tribes.
   2) The Bechuanna and Basuto tribes.
   3) The Coast Kaffirs.
   4) The civilized Nations of Europe.
9. Descriptions of Bushmen given by Early Travellers.
10. The Bushmen Struggle for Existence, and its results—fragments of their History.
11. The State of the Arts etc. among other South African tribes.
12. The Imaginative genius of the Bushmen, as shown in their Myths and Folk lore.
13. Their artistic talents, as demonstrated in their Cave-paintings.
14. Their Manners and Customs as illustrated by themselves.
15. An ancient Cult, as evidenced by Bushman symbolism.
16. The great Antiquity of the Bushman Occupation of South Africa—proved.\textsuperscript{37}
The later items on his agenda signal his determination to portray the Bushmen as a physically ‘weak race’ who nonetheless excelled in artistic endeavour, religious insight and mythological inventiveness. He also denied that they lacked any form of government, pointing out that they were divided into many tribes.28 They were primitive only in their present physical appearance, which Stow attributed to their loss of land and independence. Some of his speculations he took directly from Bleek, particularly the idea that their myth-making capacities arose from their language, whereas the ‘prefix-pronominal languages’ of the Bantu lent them to ‘ancestor worship’ only.19

Stow’s characterisation of Bushmen stands as a prime example of the deliberate feminisation of an alien people. He presents them—his ‘Painters’ and ‘Sculptors’—in classically gendered Victorian typology as small and ‘weak’, almost hairless,40 but at the same time sensitive, artistic, religious and skilled in storytelling. Even their characteristic mode of killing was a Victorian female murderer’s specialty—poison. Stow would have known of the ferocious war the Bushmen conducted with muskets in the early nineteenth century—a campaign that in the Sneuvberg district of the Cape Colony actually succeeded in forcing a lengthy abandonment of the territory.41 He downplays all such resistance in order to present them as victims of the heartless and brutal ‘Bantu intruders’:

Surely the wild Bushmen were more to be pitied than condemned. Every intruder coveted their wide-spread and magnificent hunting grounds, and when they had the temerity to use every endeavour to defend their unquestionable inheritance, which had, for unknown generations, descended to them from their forefathers, every hand was raised against them, and every contumely was heaped upon them. Can we wonder... under such circumstances, at the desperate struggles which they made to repel such grasping and merciless invaders? We can even scarcely wonder at, however much we may deplore, the frightful atrocities with which they are charged by their enemies; or the enormities into which, their untutored minds, hurried them, in their fierce and unrestrained desire, to revenge the remorseless cruelty, with which they were treated by every race with whom they came in contact, and who, without distinction, most ruthlessly trod the rights of the weaker race under foot. [Stow’s emphasis]42

Significantly, Stow followed this statement immediately with a reiteration of his argument against wrong-headed missionaries and philanthropists:

With such an array of facts before us we need not, therefore, be surprised, that these rival despoilers, after having dispossessed the true aborigines of the country, should begin to quarrel and battle over the division of booty so surreptitiously obtained. One thing, however, seems surprising, that so many writers of known philanthropy, while bewailing ‘The wrongs’ which
they consider have been inflicted upon sundry Kaffir and Hottentot tribes, should have been so led away by their not-impartial admiration of the ‘athletic and handsome race’ of one set of savages, or the facileness with which the other acquired the art of psalmody, as to so utterly forget those veritable wrongs, which had been inflicted upon the weaker race, whose territorial rights their own special protégés had usurped. [Stow’s emphasis]

Not that Stow had any intention of instigating a campaign for the restoration of the Bushmen’s lost lands. Like Bleek he viewed them as a ‘vanishing’ or ‘dying’ race, according to the iron law of evolution he had stated in one of his geological articles: ‘Paradoxical as it may seem it is death that secures the permanence of life. The sick, the weak, and the aged, are taken into the struggle for existence, the strong and vigorous are left. The weaker races succumb to the more powerful...’¹⁴ The Bushmen were useful to Stow because they were dying. No philanthropist could resurrect them as an obstacle to the white conquest of the subcontinent. Genuine as his admiration for their paintings, myths, carvings and even surviving people might have been, his ultimate interest remained what it had always been—to use the Bushmen as a stick with which to beat the humanitarian defenders of the Xhosa.

Lucy Lloyd was reportedly disappointed to discover that the great work on which Stow was engaged in the last years of his life was not the study of the Bushmen that she had expected, but a much longer work on the whole of South African history.¹⁵ However, Stow had more or less spelled out his intentions by proposing as an initial title, ‘The Aborigines of Southern Africa’ or ‘The Intrusion of the Stronger Races into the Ancient Hunting Grounds of the Bushman Race.’¹⁶ The surviving unpublished volumes of the unfinished work direct an unceasing stream of bile at the ‘Bantu usurpers’, whose unceasing internecine fighting eventually provoked a final convulsion of all-out war, during which—according to Stow—the Zulu king, Shaka, ordered the destruction of all Bushmen: ‘A crusade was raised against them, they were hunted down without mercy, in every quarter, wherever they were found, until they were extirpated; a few wretched fugitives alone escaping to the most inaccessible parts of the country.’¹⁷ It was his unwavering certainty in the truth of his central argument, and the relatively small number of printed sources on which he relied, that enabled Stow to write his entire corpus of manuscript historical volumes in two years, during which time he continued to be employed in other capacities.

Stow, Bantu Migrations and the mfecane

However questionable his methodology, George Stow drew—on a single canvas—the first known map of two constructs that would loom very large in twentieth-century
writing about pre-colonial African history: Bantu migrations and the *mfecane*. Wilhelm Bleek’s discovery of the Bantu language family in the 1850s had been closely followed by the realisation that the sub-equatorial branches of that family were as closely related as were the Romance languages of Europe. For the better part of a century, explanations for this remarkable phenomenon relied on analogies with the migrations of barbarian tribes during the Roman Empire. The spread of the Bantu languages was therefore attributed to the conquest of new territories by warriors on the move.

‘*Mfecane*’ is a word African historians of the twentieth century used to sum up a period of migration, conquest and warfare in southeastern Africa lasting from about 1820 to 1835. Although Bantu migrations have been projected to cover a period of two thousand years or more and the so-called *mfecane* lasted only about fifteen years, at a broad conceptual level the classic formulations of both Bantu expansion and the *mfecane* are closely linked. Stow, who believed that Bantu expansion into South Africa occurred very recently, treated them as two manifestations of a single process—the intrusion into Bushmen territory of a ‘stronger race’.

Victorian missionaries had toyed with theories linking the southeastern Bantu speakers with migration from Egypt, Sumeria and other lands mentioned in the Bible. However, the most influential hypothesis was advanced by another artistic polymath, Sir Harry Johnston, in his article on Bantu languages for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (10th edition, 1902–03). Johnston’s theory is very like Stow’s conception of the intrusion of stronger races:

At some period not more than 3000 years ago a powerful tribe of negroes speaking the Bantu mother-language, allied physically to the negroes of the south-western Nile and southern Lake Chad basins (yet impregnated with the Caucasian Hamitic), pushed themselves forcibly from the very heart of Africa (the region between the watersheds of the Shari, Congo and western Nile) into the southern half of the continent, which at that time was probably sparsely populated except in the north-west, east and south. The Congo basin and the south-western watershed of the Nile at the time of the Bantu invasion would have been occupied on the Atlantic seaboard by West Coast negroes, and in the centre by negroes of a low type and by Forest Pygmies; the eastern coasts of Victoria Nyanza and the East African coast region down to Zanzibar probably had a population partly Nilotic-negro and partly Hottentot-Bushman. From Lakes Tanganyika and Nyasa south-westwards to the Cape of Good Hope the population was Forest-negro, Nilotic-negro, Hottentot and Bushman. Over nearly all this area the Bantu swept; and they assimilated or absorbed the vast majority of the preceding populations, of which, physically or linguistically, the only survivors are the scattered tribes of pygmies in the forests of south-west Nile land, Congo basin and Cabun, the central Sudanese of the N.E. Congo, a few patches of quasi-Hottentot, Hamitic and Nilotic peoples
between Victoria Nyanza and the Zanzibar coast, and the Bushmen and Hottentots of southwest Africa.  

Apart from Stow's great sweep of blue watercolour representing Western Bantu tribes, and the south-western drive of the Hottentots, his depiction of migrations south of Lake Victoria bears a strong resemblance to Johnston's. Johnston does not list Stow's book among his references in his revised article for the Britannica 11th edition, but he certainly knew it. In reviewing it for The Geographical Journal in 1905, Johnston called it 'a very important work, which in some portions will probably rank as a classic in African ethnology.' That does not mean that he consciously borrowed from it. The similarity between the two writers' hypotheses on migrations probably reflects the degree to which they shared a view of barbarian invasions formed by prevailing ideas about migrations of peoples (Völkerwanderung) and the fall of Rome. Anyone familiar with historical atlasses of the time would have found it perfectly natural to assume that discrete peoples spread their languages through conquest. Indeed, this hypothesis continued to dominate scholarly work on Bantu migrations until the 1960s.  

Stow gave no chronology for his three great streams of Bantu migrations, but implied that all had been very recent, some within the last two hundred years. So convinced was he from oral evidence that Bushmen had been overrun in many districts within living memory, that he did not probe further. His unpublished manuscripts on the intrusion of the stronger races merely emphasised the ferocity of their advance, culminating in a paroxysm of violence at the beginning of the nineteenth century:

Towards the close of last century a struggle for supremacy arose between the Amathlopo [sic] and Amaswazi, in which many acts of atrocious vindictiveness were displayed on either side, and an ambitious chief of the Umntetya, who brought a number of minor tribes surrounding his territory into subjection to his authority. At this time the Amazulu were a small obscure clan, but it was amid these contions that the germ of their future power originated, until it became developed into an engine of destruction unparalleled in the traditions of the South African tribes; scattering them in every direction, and giving rise to a series of extensive migrations, which, in the end, entirely changed, with few exceptions, the relative positions of the native races which came under its widely-ramified influence; the one tribe driving the other before it, and precipitating them into portions of Bushman territory which had hitherto escaped their intrusion.  

In the end, Stow explains, the all-powerful Zulu king, Shaka, set off a terrible chain reaction:
It was during the latter part of this period of contention that the Amazulu power germinated, and developed itself, in the growth of the invincible and all-conquering Tshaka, whose terrible career is, as we have seen, unparalleled in the native traditions of South Africa, and during the course of which the main body of the Amathlubi [Amahlubi] tribes (a portion having previously—during some of their tribal quarrels, migrated in the same direction) fled, before the hordes of the enraged, and baffled Mavoane, driving in their turn, a part of the Amazizi before them into the precipitous fastnesses near the sources of the Tugela, and then turning upon the Bafokwana [Bafokwana] set in motion the tribes which afterwards gained the unenviable notoriety of the 'Mantatars': – the Amakwane [AmaNgwane?], themselves whose formidable chief, from an attempted rivalry in conquest had especially aroused the vengeance of the conquering Zulu, following close upon their trail, driving the weaker tribes in front of them, in their attempt to escape the ire of Tshaka.\(^{51}\)

All these events are inscribed on Stow's map in a spaghetti tangle of arrows. Harry Johnston's perceptive imagination understood at once how this remarkable series of movements might help to explain the longer sequence of Bantu migrations:

Mr. Stow gives a most interesting account of that strange event in the dawn of South African history—the invasion from across the Limpopo of the Mantari cannibals. This was one of the extraordinary movements characteristic of universal history until a real civilization had fixed rigid bounds to the movements of peoples.\(^{54}\)

Thus recent history demonstrated the likelihood of the Bantu languages having been spread through very rapid movements of predation and conquest.

Thanks to Eric Walker's *History of Southern Africa* (1928), the events depicted on Stow's map came to be known as the *mfecane*, a word of uncertain derivation.\(^{55}\) It may have owed something to a prince of Lesotho's royal house, Nehemiah Moshweshwe, who used the word 'ifaqane' in the late nineteenth century to denote 'The struggles of wandering tribes accompanied by their families', or it may be a form of the word 'Fetelani', which came to be widely used by white settlers and British officials in the 1820s to refer to unknown peoples carrying out raids into Xhosa territory.\(^{56}\) A variation, 'Ficane', appears on Stow's map (bottom centre) at the end of the line he labels Amakwane (by which is probably meant AmaNgwane).

In the 1960s historian John Omer-Cooper produced a book, *The Zulu Aftermath*, which included another map purporting to show mass migrations during the *mfecane*.\(^{57}\) While it is much simpler than Stow's map, its main outline bears a remarkable resemblance from southern Africa to the African Lakes. Omer-Cooper listed Stow's book in his bibliography, which increases the likelihood that the publisher's map-maker drew on
Detail (lower centre) from Stow’s ‘Sketch Map’, 1880, the first mfe cane map.
Stow's cartography. Other influential writers dealing with the *mfecane* also made use of Stow, among them D. E. Ellenberger and Peter Becker.\(^5^9\) Some wondered why Stow had omitted important events of the period, not realising that the two volumes of his manuscript that treat the 1820s and 1830s remained unknown until discovered by his biographer, Robert Young, in the office of Stow's literary executor, Charles Orpen.

That was not the only respect in which Stow's influence can be shown to have lingered long after his death. When G. M. Theal responded to Lucy Lloyd's request to help find a publisher for Stow's book, he cast a critical eye over the posthumous manuscripts. Sonnenschein, the publisher, asked that about 50,000 words be cut from the manuscript that Lloyd had purchased from Stow's widow. George Theal, as editor, chose to cut out the lengthy extracts from printed books that Stow had copied into his text.\(^6^0\)

When Stow's biographer, Robert Young, discovered further manuscripts in the office of Stow's executor, C. S. Orpen, and submitted them for Theal's inspection, he was told that 'Though it would have been of considerable value, if it had been published twenty-five years ago, yet there was little in it that had not been ascertained and made public since.'\(^6^0\) That is not to say that Theal had not himself drawn something from Stow. Their views on the antiquity of the Bushmen, in contrast to the recent migration of the Bantu-speaking farmers, coincide to such an extent that Saul Dubow has described them as the Stow–Theal hypothesis.\(^6^1\) Dubow goes on to describe the posthumous publication as 'un-doubtedly an important intervention: appearing at a significant moment in the development of South African ethnology, it helped considerably to coalesce thinking on the question of racial origins.'

A comparison between successive versions of Theal's historical writings on South Africa suggests that more than convergent thinking was at work. Theal's first historical work contains no speculation on migrations prior to the nineteenth century.\(^6^2\) His *Short History of South Africa* (1890) contains a coloured map showing 'as nearly as is possible now to ascertain, the position of different Bantu and Hottentot tribes when white men first became acquainted with them.'\(^6^3\) By 1902, two years before Lucy Lloyd sent him the Stow manuscripts, he wrote that the Bushmen may have been in South Africa as long as humans had lived in Europe, long before the arrival of the Hottentots. As for the Bantu, 'when they crossed the Zambesi cannot be determined, but probably it was earlier than the commencement of the Christian era by many hundred of years. They did not extend beyond the Limpopo, however, until a much later date.'\(^6^4\) He did not say what that date might have been.

After editing Stow's book Theal grew much bolder in his assertions. In 1910 he was not quite certain, 'as Mr. Stow believed' that it was the 'Betshuana...who drove the Hottentots from their native home...but apparently they came from the same locality.' Instead of implying, as he had in 1902, that the Hottentot migration had happened three or four...
thousand years ago, he now placed the final periods of migration from the fifteenth century onward—thus agreeing with Stow on a final Hottentot push down the southwest African coast in about AD1400.65 Instead of relying on linguistic evidence, as Stow had done, to differentiate the ‘Ama-prefix tribes’ from the ‘Ba-prefix tribes’, Theal used European archival evidence to argue that the southeastern line of migration was due to a single tribal movement:

The great Abambo tribe, which afterwards distributed its sections more widely than any other except the Bakwena in South Africa, migrated to the valley of the Tugela at this time. [c.1600]. It was first seen by white men on the banks of the Zambezi above Tete, coming down from the northwest, and working terrible havoc with the weaker tribes in its way.66

Most significant of all, Theal now accepted the results of Stow’s dubious oral methodology: ‘The legends of all the tribes now living south of the Zambezi river, none of which can be more than a few centuries old, point to a distant northern occupation, and in some cases particulars are given which prove the traditions to be in that respect correct.’67 By 1919, when Theal published Ethnography and Condition of South Africa Before A.D. 1505, the ‘Stow–Theal’ construction of migrations was virtually complete, with all migrations South of the Limpopo dated after 1505, before which time the only inhabitants were Bushmen.68

Needless to say, Stow also contributed mightily to the idealisation of Bushmen as ‘The little people’, ‘The harmless people’ who were the true owners of the land. Thus he appears in Laurens van der Post’s Lost World of the Kalahari, as ‘The great-hearted and dedicated Stow’.69 Van der Post practically paraphrases Stow in that hugely influential book and television series:

He alone of all the races of Africa, was so much of its earth and innermost being that he tried constantly to glorify it by adoring its stones and decorating its rocks with painting. We other races went through Africa like locusts devouring and stripping the land for what we could get out of it. The Bushman was there solely because he belonged to it.70

Stow’s Art and the Power of Colour

To some extent the nature of his medium, watercolour, dictated Stow’s deployment of colour. Darker colours had to be laid over lighter ones—not vice versa. The visual power of the finished product derives partly from the way in which the agitated, irregular and contorted darker shapes thrusting upward in the lower centre of the map stand out from the smooth downward sweep of the pastels. Viewed from Stow’s perspective on
chronology, the darkest streams represent the most recent events. Thus time itself can be read as a progress from lighter colours to the darker ones. It might thus be argued that the sinister appearance of the darker shapes was an accidental by-product of technique. On the other hand, Stow as a skilled watercolourist would have been keenly aware of the visual effects he was creating. It is equally clear that those effects accorded with his ideological stance. The ‘stronger Bantu races’ are visual as well as physical intruders. Worst of all are those he viewed as deriving from Zululand, bent on the extermination of the poor Bushmen: the ‘engine of destruction unparalleled in the traditions of the South African tribes.’ It was therefore fitting that he should clothe them in black, most tellingly in the spectral vision of the ‘Matabili’ monster whose tentacles stretch out to grasp central Africa. And it might have seemed equally clear to his white colonial readers that the antidote to this dark menace was the spread of white power.