

CHAPTER 1 GEORGE WILLIAM STOW, PIONEER AND PRECURSOR OF ROCK ART CONSERVATION

One thing is certain, if I am spared I shall use every effort to secure all the paintings in the state that I possibly can, that some record may be kept (imperfect as it must necessarily be....). I have never lost an opportunity during that time of rescuing from total obliteration the memory of their wonderful artistic labours, at the same time buoying myself up with the hope that by so doing a foundation might be laid to a work that might ultimately prove to be of considerable importance and value to the student of the earlier races of mankind.

George William Stow to Lucy Lloyd, 4 June 1877

Today George William Stow is remembered chiefly as the discoverer of the rich coal deposits that were to lead to the establishment of the flourishing town of Vereeniging in the Vaal area (Mendelsohn 1991:11; 54-55). This achievement has never been questioned. However, his considerable contribution as ethnographer, recorder of rock art and as the precursor of rock art conservation in South Africa, has never been sufficiently acknowledged. In the chapter that follows these achievements are discussed against the backdrop of his geological activities in the Vereeniging area and elsewhere. Inevitably, this chapter also includes a critical assessment of the accusations of fraud levelled against him in recent years.

Stow was a gifted historian and ethnographer and during his geological explorations he developed an abiding interest in the history of the indigenous peoples of South

Africa and their rich rock art legacy. In the late nineteenth century there was consensus that the best method of conservation was to remove the rock art physically from its position and transport it to a place of safe-keeping. During this period this practice was followed by a number of prominent researchers including the geologist E.J. Dunn, the pioneer missionary A. Merensky and the Viennese anthropologist R. Pöch (Van der Walt 1987:50-51). During two separate sojourns (1872-1879 and 1883-1887) the Czechoslovakian born Emil Holub assiduously removed a large number of engravings from their sites and shipped them to various museums in Europe. From Gestoptefontein alone (near Ottosdal) he removed at least 140 engravings, mainly depictions of wild animals; a substantial number of non-representational images, obviously of little importance to him, were left intact (Van der Walt 1987:52-53). Stow did not subscribe to this practice and believed instead that the best method of conservation was to make facsimile copies of the rock art. He became a passionate spokesman for the conservation of the art and made numerous copies of both paintings and engravings. He did not restrict himself to representational images of animals and people, but also made copies of the non-representational imagery, becoming the first researcher to focus attention on these inexplicable images. Stow was completely self-taught in the three fields that would bring him fame - geology, ethnology and as copyist of and spokesman for the preservation of rock art. In his life and work they are inextricably bound together. During the long periods he spent in the field on reconnaissance, also in the Vaal area, these interests developed coevally, enriching and impacting the one on the other.

Stow was born in England in 1822 where he received a good education but failed to complete any professional qualification. He settled in the Cape Colony on the turbulent eastern frontier in 1843 where he worked in various capacities and also served in the commissariat of the colonial army (Young 1908:1-2), and consequently became closely involved in ongoing conflicts between the colonists and the neighbouring Xhosa people. These encounters led to an interest in the indigenous peoples of the country, an interest that would culminate many years later in his pioneering treatise *The native races of South Africa* (1905) 1964. It was also during this period that his second abiding interest, geology, was aroused (Young 1908:2). He settled in Queenstown and remained there until 1871 simultaneously pursuing both his ethnological and geological interests. During this relatively stable period in his life he began systematically to copy the rock paintings in the Queenstown and Cradock districts (Schoeman 1997:45). In a letter written many years later on 31 August 1878 to Lucy Lloyd, Stow recalled his first encounter with rock art and his passionate conviction that he was duty-bound to copy as much of the art as possible:

I visited the place and examined with delight the first Bushman paintings that I had ever seen. It seemed to flash over me at once what a work laid open before me if I could only attempt it. ... From that time forth, time and circumstances permitting, I have never neglected an opportunity of securing copies of all that came within my reach. (cited in Schoeman 1997:83)

Stow was a prolific letter-writer and throughout his life he continued corresponding with a number of eminent personages, hoping that they could assist him in bringing his various projects to fruition (Schoeman 1997). In a letter to Prof. T. Rupert Jones of the Geological Society of London and published in *Nature* on 8 December 1870, he expressed his concern at the rapid disappearance of the rock art and the possibility of using copies of the art to illustrate a history of the Bushman:

... as the paintings are becoming obliterated very fast, it struck me that it would be well to make copies of them before these interesting relics of an almost extinct race are entirely destroyed. This gave rise to an idea in my mind of collecting material enough to compile a history of the manners and customs of the Bushmen as depicted by themselves. (cited in Schoeman 1997:48)

During the next three years while trying to establish himself as a wine merchant and then as a diamond dealer in the Kimberley area, Stow continued his interest in geology, compiled notes on the indigenous peoples and made copies of the rock art. He continued his extensive correspondence, published several scientific papers and was elected a member of the Geological Society of England (Schoeman 1997:44). This led to an appointment in 1874 by the legislative of Griqualand West (Northern Cape) to make a geological survey of parts of the Cape Colony between the Modder and Vaal rivers (Young 1908:5-7). In spite of working under extremely harsh conditions and without full remuneration, Stow persevered in his explorations and also found time to collect further material for his treatise. The Northern Cape is particularly rich in rock engraving sites and Stow continued his self-imposed task of

copying as much of the art as possible. It was during this period that he first encountered the non-representational engravings at Blauwbank (Driekopseiland) near Kimberley, probably in the company of his friend F.H.S. Orpen, Surveyor-General of Griqualand West and member of a prominent South African family (Schoeman 1997:45). Stow was intrigued by these enigmatic images and made a large number of copies of them. Contrary to popular opinion, he did not dismiss them as meaningless scribbles but referred to them as 'mystic symbols' and speculated on a possible symbolic meaning. In his treatise that was published posthumously, four pages are devoted to a description of this site and one page of copies of engravings from Driekopseiland is included (Stow (1905) 1964:27-30). Unfortunately Stow does not elaborate on the precise nature of these mystic symbols, or attempt to interpret them. In his subsequent geological reconnaissance of the Vaal area in the following year, Stow would encounter remarkably similar engravings in the area that would become known as Vereeniging.

During this period Stow began corresponding with the renowned philologist Dr. Wilhelm H.I. Bleek regarding his proposed treatise and included a number of his copies of the rock art (Schoeman 1997:42). Bleek was the curator of the Grey Collection in Cape Town and in the course of his philological research he had developed a particular interest in the language and folklore of the Bushman (Deacon 1996:94-96). This research was partly funded by the Cape Government and Bleek was expected to submit regular official reports on his progress. In his second official report published in 1875 Bleek acknowledged the receipt of copies of rock

art from Stow, referring to them as the 'magnificent collection of 42 Bushman paintings' and expressed the hope of their 'publication, which we hope and trust will be possible to Mr Stow ere long ...' (cited in Schoeman 1997:42). This promising development was cut short by Bleek's death in August of 1875, but was continued by his sister-in-law and collaborator, Lucy C. Lloyd. Lloyd worked closely with Bleek and was responsible for many of the interviews, transcripts and translations of the verbatim accounts delivered by Bushman informants to Bleek and Lloyd (Schmidt 1996:69-72). After Bleek's death Lloyd continued the work that he had initiated and she would also play a crucial role in the eventual publication of Stow's manuscript. Within two weeks of Bleek's death, Lloyd wrote to Stow, assuring him 'that we will take the greatest care of your precious collection of Bushman drawings and paintings, until such time as they return back to your care' (cited in Schoeman 1997:63). Stow responded with enthusiasm and he continued to keep Lloyd informed of the progress of his manuscript. He suggested the following title:

The Bushmen of South Africa

Their manners and customs

as illustrated by themselves

With numerous fac-simile (sic) copies of their cave-paintings etc

To which is added

a short dissertation upon the forms

of art and manufacture

found among the Native tribes

of this portion of the southern continent. (cited in Schoeman 1997:67-68)

In November 1876 due to stoppage of pay by the legislative who had employed him, Stow was forced to cease any further exploration in Griqualand West and return to Queenstown. His research on the geology of Griqualand West remained unpublished (Young 1908:9). Due to the intervention of C.S. Orpen, the local attorney in Smithfield and brother of F.H.S. Orpen, a meeting was arranged with President Brand of the Orange Free State. Brand was impressed with Stow's knowledge and enthusiasm and persuaded the Volksraad to appoint him to carry out a geological survey of the Orange Free State (Schoeman 1997:46-47). Before commencing, Stow spent a month copying the rock art in the vicinity of the Witteberge on the Basutoland (Lesotho) border. In a letter written to Lloyd on 4 June 1877 Stow describes his compulsion 'to secure as many additions as I possibly can whilst engaged in my survey, without trenching upon the time that has to be spent in other objects', and how he employed a young Bushman to 'hunt for any Bushman paintings and mark them down, so that when my work proper of the day is done, he can guide me to the several spots without loss of time; and in half an hour the copies are secure and I can return to my encampment rejoicing at the additional spoils I have rescued from destruction.' (cited in Schoeman 1997:71). In the introduction to the 1930 publication of Stow's copies, Dorothea Bleek describes the very real problems that Stow experienced working in the field under primitive conditions, his constant efforts to secure drawing materials, and the unique copy method he subsequently developed (Stow & Bleek 1930:xxvi-xxvii). This copy method included the deliberate selection and omission of images and even combining images from different rock surfaces, inevitably leading to inaccuracies in

some of his copies. In the late nineteenth century rock art research was in its infancy and it would be many years before copy methods would be perfected. These inaccuracies do not necessarily detract from Stow's contribution to rock art conservation. As succinctly summed up by Dorothea Bleek: 'In spite of small slips Stow has usually given a very truthful reproduction of the Bushman touch and spirit' (Stow & Bleek 1930:xxvii).

Stow commenced his survey of the Orange Free State on 6 April 1877. He examined the area between the Orange and Caledon Rivers and proceeded north to Winburg where he completed his first report in April 1878, writing that he had found no trace of precious stones or other minerals, but that there were strong indications of coal. His words were prophetic:

It seems to me ... that we are here upon the outer edges of the great coal-field of South Africa: and I cannot help feeling impressed with the idea that the nearer we approach the coal deposits of the Transvaal and Natal, the thicker the seams of Free State coal will be found to be. I propose, therefore, as soon as I have finished my inspection here, to move in that direction towards the Vaal. (cited in Young 1908:10-11)

While engaged in his reconnaissance of the Orange Free State, Stow also found time to work on his treatise. In the course of his geological excursions he had conducted interviews with a large number of informants, consulted written sources and had amassed a huge body of information regarding both the Bushmen and the other

indigenous peoples of the country. In a letter to Lloyd dated 21 October 1878 he describes his *modus operandi*:

With regard to some of the tribes that intruded into the Bushmen's hunting-ground, you will be both pleased and surprised at the amount of information I have been able to collect, almost a complete history in some instances, many full of sensational episodes. Wherever I go, whenever I can hear of an old native - Bushman, Basutu 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. (cited in Schoeman 1997:89)

As a result of these interviews his original idea of writing only about the Bushmen changed over a period of time and he decided to write a comprehensive history of all the indigenous peoples. In a lengthy letter to Lloyd written on 31 August 1878, he outlined his proposed synopsis. No less than four of the seventeen chapters would be devoted to rock art, and one entire chapter entitled *An ancient cult, as evidenced by Bushman symbolism*, would be devoted to a description of the non-representational engravings (Schoeman 1997:83-84). Unfortunately this chapter was never written.

Stow continued his survey of the Orange Free State and proceeded through Kroonstad and Heilbron towards the Transvaal border. Where the Taaiboschspruit has its confluence with the Vaal River, opposite what is today Vanderbijlpark, he found exceptionally rich outcrops of coal. Further investigation at Maccauvlei and

on the banks of the Leeuspruit, confirmed that he had indeed discovered a major coal field. This area, later to be known as the Vereeniging-Clydesdale coal field, subsequently proved to be one of the most significant coal fields in South Africa with an estimated life of 400 years (Willemse 1999:22). Stow's employers in Bloemfontein were not interested in a remote coal field in the Transvaal, and Stow was forced to return to Bloemfontein while awaiting their final decision. Undaunted by this disappointment, Stow continued his ethnological research and made copies of the rock art. On 25 June 1879 he wrote to Lloyd: 'The only consolation is that I have made some great strides with my Bushman work... The Free State has proved a kind of headquarters for carrying out such an enquiry....' (cited in Schoeman 1997:92). In spite of Brand's affirmative recommendation to the Volksraad, Stow's services were terminated and he found himself unemployed once more. Undeterred, the intrepid Stow turned to his other great accomplishment, his knowledge of the customs of the indigenous peoples of South Africa, and sought employment as a 'native agency or magistrate' (Schoeman 1997:96). Throughout the latter half of 1879, while seeking employment, he visited the Vaal area on a tour of inspection and continued to collect information for his treatise. In a letter dated 12 August 1879 he informed Lloyd that he had collected enough material to fill two separate volumes, an introductory work on the Bushman race, and a main work on the other indigenous peoples of South Africa. A chapter *The great migration of tribes to the south of the Vaal* would be included in the main volume (Schoeman 1997:96-97). In March 1880 Stow began negotiations with the publisher John Murray of London regarding the publication of his introductory work (Schoeman 1997:100). In a letter

to Lloyd dated 12 May 1880 he set out the synopsis of the main work to be titled *The Intrusion of the Stronger Races* (Schoeman 1997:102-104).

While concluding negotiations with Murray, Stow did not neglect his geological interests and continued in his efforts to interest the authorities in the geological work he had undertaken in Griqualand West, and in his discovery of the coal deposits in the northern Orange Free State and the adjoining Transvaal. The Kimberley mining magnate and entrepreneur Sammy Marks was quick to realise the potential of these new coal fields and a meeting was arranged with Stow to discuss the possibility of floating coal down the river to Kimberley, as the demand for fuel in Kimberley was great (Mendelsohn 1991:11). Convinced of the viability of the new coal fields, Marks set about acquiring a number of affluent investors to finance the proposed mining operations and in 1880 formed the company *De Zuid Afrikaansche en Oranje Vrijstaatsche Kolen en Mineralen Vereeniging* (The South African and Orange Free State Coal and Mineral Mining Association) (Mendelsohn 1991:11). Stow received ten of the total of 75 shares and was appointed manager of mining operations. His first task was to buy coal-bearing farms. Assisted by John Fraser, an attorney from Bloemfontein, Stow acquired 50 990,4 ha of land in the Vaal area on both the Free State and Transvaal banks of the river, of which 75 per cent proved to be coal-bearing (Leigh 1968:19). This included the farm Leeukuil no. 596 on the northern banks of the Vaal River, situated approximately two-and-a-half km from Viljoensdrift (on the present premises of Vereeniging Refractories). Stow began his mining operations here and the pit later became part of the

Bedworth Colliery (Willemse 1999:28). The adjoining property of Klipplaatdrift no. 601 (Willemse 1999:24-25) was also acquired. According to the survey conducted many years later by Van Riet Lowe (1952:50), engravings occurred on both these farms, but have since become lost.

Stow's appointment by Marks and the fact that he was gainfully employed with a secure future, did not diminish his interest in his proposed publication and he continued writing his manuscript under extremely difficult conditions. He wrote to Murray on 6 September 1880:

The delay with this portion (the fourth instalment of his manuscript) has arisen from the fact that I have been engaged for the last six or seven weeks along the banks of the Vaal inspecting the Free State coal deposits. ... but as a travelling wagon is my only residence while engaged in field work, and a series of sandstorms intermitting with rain and snow having continued for fourteen or sixteen days and still showing no signs of abating... The condition of the MSS will show how penetrating the fine dust and sand is.... (cited in Schoeman 1997:106)

A month later Stow received the heartbreaking news that due to the great length of his manuscript, Murray was unable to accept it for publication (Schoeman 1997:107). During the next two years and until his death he remained in the service of Marks, travelling intermittently between Bloemfontein and the Vaal area, buying further coal-bearing farms and overseeing mining operations. As fate would decree, the farm with the richest rock engraving site in the Vaal area was not included in his

purchase of coal-bearing farms. During the previous year (1881) the two free-hold farms Waldrift No. 599 and Kookfontein No. 187 were bought by Cecil John Rhodes through De Beers Consolidated Mines in equal partnership with their discoverer Donald McKay. McKay, a market master from Kimberley had identified the coal ridge on Kookfontein as early as 1868 (Vaal Teknorama Archives Depot, personalities file M) and commenced mining in 1882 (Willemse 1999:18). Kookfontein was also the site of a sandstone outcrop covered with a large number of rock engravings. Some years later McKay became the sole owner of these two coal-bearing farms. The area immediately adjoining the rock engraving site was not included in mining operations and one can only surmise that Stow may have been instrumental in this decision. In 1882, on a routine visit to the Vaal area, Marks found Stow extremely ill and in a state of exhaustion. He was immediately dispatched to the nearest town to consult a doctor and recovered sufficiently to resume his duties at Bedworth Colliery. A few weeks later, on 7 March 1882, he suffered a fatal heart attack (Mendelsohn 1991:12; 27). Stow did not live to see the fruits of his labours.

Throughout his lifetime Stow used every opportunity to arouse interest in his 'Bushman work' in order to create an awareness of rock art conservation. With this purpose in mind he frequently displayed his copies of rock art to various influential people hoping that they could assist him in eventually gaining a publisher. Consequently over a period of time his copies were scrutinised and handled by many different people, and transported (by various means) to destinations both

locally and abroad (Schoeman 1997). At the time of his death these copies were widely dispersed. A number had been delivered to Murray the publisher, ostensibly by William Littleton, the secretary of the Governor of the Cape Colony Sir Bartle Frere, and were in London (Schoeman 1997:91). Lloyd had in her possession the copies of paintings and engravings that Stow had sent to Bleek in 1875 (Schoeman 1997:115), and Stow's widow Fanny had in her care a large portfolio containing approximately 60 copies (Schoeman 1997:113). In a letter to Lloyd, C.S. Orpen referred to a further 300 copies believed to be in her possession (Schoeman 1997:120). Shortly after Stow's death Lloyd began negotiations with his widow in order to purchase the entire collection of copies as she intended including them in a publication of the research that she and Wilhelm Bleek had completed:

... I shall be glad to be permitted to become their purchaser ... and then they might be published (always, of course, as Mr Stow's work) with the mass of material with regard to the Bushmen which has been accumulated by the late Dr. Bleek and myself. (cited in Schoeman 1997:110)

Lloyd finally bought the entire collection for one hundred pounds sterling, paid to Stow's widow in installments over several months (Schoeman 1997:115). The successful conclusion of these negotiations led Stow's widow to request Lloyd to intervene in the matter of the publication of the manuscript. After a protracted correspondence between Lloyd, C.S. Orpen and Fanny Stow (Schoeman 1997:109-112) the manuscript was finally sent to the historian G.M. Theal, then residing in London, for his inspection and advice (Schoeman 1997:123). In accordance with

the popular perceptions of the period, Theal had pronounced views on the inferiority of the black and coloured races; he nevertheless recognised that the manuscript could make an important contribution. Theal agreed to edit the manuscript and *The native races of South Africa* finally appeared in 1905. The original manuscript had been severely edited by Theal. In the preface he motivated this decision: 'It was clogged with a vast number of extracts from almost every English book previously published.... With Miss Lloyd's consent, I therefore struck nearly all of them out'. According to Schoeman (1997:61), Theal also deliberately omitted three entire sections. From an unpublished letter dated 10 October 1944, from Dorothea Bleek to Maria Wilman of the McGregor Museum, it is clear that this was not a deliberate act of omission on Theal's part, but that these sections were only located many years later in a box in the Orange Free State by Stow's biographer, Robert B. Young (McGregor Museum Archives Depot MMKD 2648/2).

Stow's dream of profusely illustrating his manuscript with his copies of rock art did not materialise. Writing to Lloyd on 21 October 1878, Stow gave a detailed description of four 'specimen cartoons' that he thought should be submitted to prospective publishers (Schoeman 1997:90). When the manuscript was finally published 23 years after Stow's death it was clear that Stow's suggestions had only been partially followed. Not only had his original titles (as listed in the letter) been freely changed, but his suggestion of *Advance of women in masquerading dresses*, described by him as 'a good representative one' and depicting female dancers wearing caps made of gemsbok's heads, had been completely overlooked and

replaced with *Bushman disguised as Ostrich* (see Stow (1905) 1964:op. p. 96). This copy is not dated or signed by Stow. No mention is made of this particular copy in Stow's text or in the many letters he wrote to Lloyd regarding his proposed publication (Schoeman 1997). The original cave painting has never been located.

In recent years Stow has been accused of deliberately forging *Bushman disguised as Ostrich* (Dowson *et al.* 1994:3-38). The gist of the accusation is that the blue ostriches (as the copy became known) is not copied from an existing rock painting, but is derived from an illustration in Robert Moffat's *Missionary labours and scenes in South Africa* (1842); the authors also question the validity of the ostrich hunting strategy of the Bushmen as depicted in this copy and also by a number of early travellers, and argue that depictions of therianthropes (partly human, partly animal) in rock art, do not portray hunting disguises but the trance experience of the shaman (Dowson *et al.* 1994:8). The authors believe that 'an intentional hoax has been perpetrated' by Stow because 'Stow was interested in the art principally because he believed it portrayed a history of the manners and customs of the Bushmen – hunting scenes, dances, fighting ... disguises etc.' (Dowson *et al.* 1994:22). Parallels are drawn with the infamous Piltdown hoax and the authors point out that 'once a culprit has been identified, the rest of his or her work must be subjected to a more critical scrutiny' (Dowson *et al.* 1994:23). It seems highly unlikely that Stow would have resorted to these extreme measures in order to give greater credibility to his belief in the narrative purpose of the art, as he already had in his possession a number of copies that convincingly depicted Bushmen in battle scenes and in

hunting and dancing disguise (see Stow & Bleek 1930). There was simply no need to 'fake' such a copy. Stow's efforts to secure a publisher for his treatise (which embraced his narrative view of the art) were fully supported by W.H.I Bleek, by Lucy Lloyd and by a small but extremely influential group that included Sir Bartle Frere, Governor of the Cape Colony (Schoeman 1997). Stow was recognised by his contemporaries as an authority, and while conflicting opinions may have been expressed in private, there was no question of public dissension. Theoretical issues and academic debate regarding the motivation and meaning of the art was practically non-existent in the nineteenth century and would only become a burning issue many years later with the introduction of the shamanistic approach (which is diametrically opposite to the historical/narrative approach) (see Lewis-Williams 1981; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989).

Consideration must also be given to the fact that from Stow's death (1882) to the publication of his manuscript (1905), and finally to the Stow and Bleek publication (1930), his copies were freely inspected and copied, passed hands several times, were perused by at least three different publishers, and were transported, to and fro, between two continents (Schoeman 1997). Of particular significance is also the fact that his manuscript was only published 23 years after his death and that substantial liberties had been taken both with the text and the choice of copies of paintings. Under these adverse circumstances, the possibility of the original collection remaining intact is unlikely, and extraneous intervention after his death cannot be excluded. However, there is no evidence that points to Stow (or any other party)

committing deliberate fraud. In the final analysis the defamatory article is more about two mutually exclusive interpretational approaches, than it is about an alleged forgery. In the process, irreparable harm has been done to the name of Stow and his contribution as a pioneer of rock art research. This includes not only his copies of rock art (many of which have since become obliterated), but also the valuable information he obtained from Bushman informants regarding their art and culture.

Lloyd's wish to publish the remaining bulk of Stow's copies was not realised in her lifetime and she bequeathed the copies to her niece Dorothea Bleek. Dorothea was fluent in the /Xam language and had also taken a course in African languages in Germany. Returning to South Africa in 1904 from Germany, she assisted her aunt Lucy Lloyd in the preparation and editing of Lloyd and Bleek's great work *Specimens of Bushman folklore* (1911) (Deacon & Dowson (eds.) 1996:8). Besides bringing to completion the *Bushman Dictionary* (1956) and undertaking numerous field trips to record the vocabularies and genealogies of indigenous peoples, she persevered in seeking a publisher for Stow's copies of rock art. Finally, with the financial assistance of the Carnegie Trust, 74 of Stow's copies were published in *Rock paintings in South Africa* (1930) with extensive commentary by Dorothea Bleek (Stow & Bleek 1930:xv-xxviii). One of the copies was *The advance of women in masquerading dresses*, the copy that had deliberately been omitted from the publication of his manuscript. The copy first printed in 1905 as *Bushman disguised as Ostrich*, was also included, this time as *Ostrich hunt* (Stow & Bleek 1930:xvii). A close comparison of the two versions reveals a number of stylistic

disparities, indicating that two different persons were involved in their execution. If this 1930 version is indeed the original 'fake' executed by Stow, it must be assumed that the 1905 version is a fake of Stow's 'fake'. The question must also be asked why it was necessary to make a fake if a perfectly acceptable copy – the 1930 version, was available? Endless speculation is possible, but all allegations remain conjectural and unproven.

Twenty years have elapsed since the publication of the defamatory article; throughout this period Stow's name has been markedly absent from research papers and publications. However, in a recent publication *Rock art in Africa. Mythology and legend* (2004), renowned French researcher Jean-Loïc Le Quellec, acknowledges Stow's pioneering contribution to rock art conservation and includes a large number of Stow's copies in the publication, including the 1930 version of the blue ostriches, *Ostrich hunt*. He cites many examples of hunting camouflage in rock art, including a recently discovered 'frieze of three men disguised as ostriches for the hunt' (Le Quellec 2004:193). Le Quellec also cites the testimony of Bushman informants as recorded by both Stow and Wilhelm Bleek, suggesting a mythological (rather than shamanistic) origin for the art.

At the time of his death Stow had been in the field for more than 30 years and had been making copies of the rock art for almost an equal number of years. Writing to Lloyd on 31 August 1878 while engaged in reconnaissance in the Vaal area, Stow expressed the wish that he be spared to 'labour on patiently and diligently' with his

'Bushman work' as 'life is uncertain and short', and that it would be 'sufficient to know that by such earnest endeavours the foundations have been laid upon which others can build, by carrying on similar researches in the old land of southern Africa' (cited in Schoeman 1997:85-86). Stow's efforts were not in vain and almost immediately after his death a number of concerned individuals continued recording and copying the art. The most notable was Andrew Geddes Bain the pioneer builder of roads and mountain passes, who succeeded in exhibiting 38 of his copies in London in 1886 (Rudner 1989:2). The first tentative effort towards rock art conservation occurred seven years later in 1893 in the Cape Colony when magistrates were requested to list all the paintings and engravings in their districts (Rudner 1989:2). Three years later in 1896 at a combined meeting of the Philosophical and Photographic Societies of Cape Town, an ambitious plan was drafted for amateur photographers 'who might be willing to take part in the scheme for obtaining copies of all the Bushman Paintings and Carvings in the Colony' (cited in Rudner 1989:2). Progress in the Transvaal was understandably much slower. Largely isolated from cultural events in the Cape Colony, the young republic was engaged in a struggle with the Imperial Government to retain its independence (Davenport 1989:202-211). Matters of conservation would not be addressed for many years.

As is indicated in this chapter, Stow's legacy to rock art is manifold. While exploiting South Africa's mineral wealth, he discovered another kind of wealth – South Africa's great rock art heritage. Stow repeatedly expressed deep concern at

the rapid disappearance of these 'memorials upon the rocks' and believed that the only way to preserve them was to make facsimile copies of them. He subsequently became the first person ever to systematically search for sites and to record as many of the images as possible. Of particular significance for the present study is his early interest in non-representational imagery, and his conviction that these enigmatic images were not meaningless scribbles, but held some meaning. Stow's presence in the Vaal area would inspire the pioneer T.N. Leslie to further explore the prehistory of the area, subsequently paving the way for Van Riet Lowe's systematic survey of Vereeniging's prehistoric past, including the rock engravings of Redan.



Figure 1. *George William Stow (Vaal Teknorama).*



Figure 2. *Central mine, the first mine in Vereeniging (Vaal Teknorama).*



Figure 3. *George William Stow's copy of a rock painting (Rosenthal & Goodwin 1953:pl. 27).*

most characteristic of these I have made most careful rubbings & sketches. Their diversity is astonishing - and what is more surprising is the great similarity which some of them bear to the religious symbols used - by some of the most ancient, but now civilized nations. The meaning of these symbols were no doubt kept secret, - and it is only the initiated who would have been able to ^{have} explained them. These emblems & symbols have astonished me more than anything else, I have previously discovered - for amongst them we find the circle - the crescent - the square - and several others that appear to be mystic phallic emblems. I will however send one of these when I send the others - with kind regards - I remain yours very sincerely
W. H. Stow 23.1.74

Paul Power
 12 Decr 1874

My dear Sir,

As I have been employed for several months past - in carrying on the field-work - of a geological survey of a portion of England West - and have only received your letters in a most irregular manner - I have been unable to answer your kind and welcome letter earlier. I have written to Leamington - to ask my friends to send me, my large portfolio of ^{myself} Bushman drawings, - and I expect that it will arrive very shortly

Figure 4. A page from Stow's letter to W.H.I. Bleek describing his first encounter with non-representational imagery (McGregor Museum).

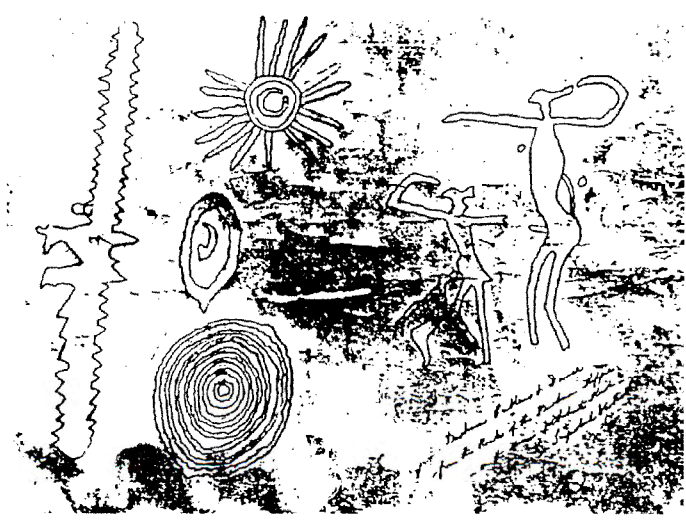


Figure 5. Stow's copies of non-representational imagery (McGregor Museum).

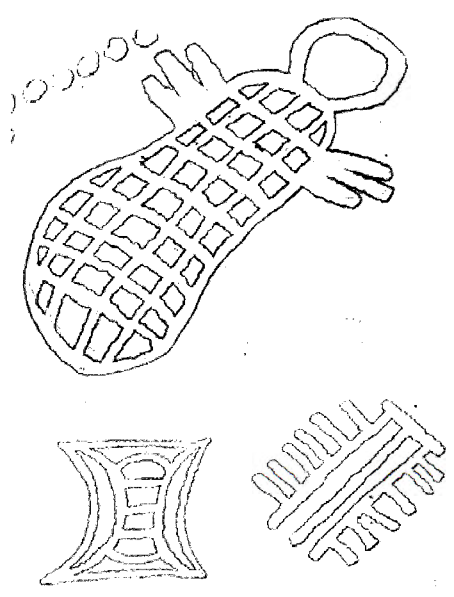


Figure 6. Stow's copies of non-representational imagery (McGregor Museum).