

AUTHOR:Luvuyo Wotshela¹,**AFFILIATION:**

¹Professor and Head at
National Heritage and
Cultural Studies Centre
(NAHECS), University of
Fort Hare

EMAIL:

LWotshela@ufh.ac.za

DOI: [https://dx.doi.](https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH45.v2.1)

[org/10.18820/24150509/
SJCH45.v2.1](https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH45.v2.1)

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)

ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)

Southern Journal for
Contemporary History

2020 45(2):1-32

PUBLISHED:

30 December 2020



Published by the UFS

<http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/jch>

© Creative Commons
With Attribution (CC-BY)



UNFULFILLED POTENTIAL: CONFINED DESTINY OF HISTORICAL STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE, 1960 -2015

ABSTRACT

Recently, there are growing countrywide dialogues within several universities, and certainly at the University of Fort Hare about curricula review and realignment of academic departments. History is central to such discussions, and in this institution, it is not simply as a scholarly discipline, linked to teaching and research. Indeed, the identity of Fort Hare, as the first African institution of higher learning in the sub-Sahara makes its legacy even gripping. Almost every epoch of the evolution of Fort Hare had generational imprint: from the first half of the twentieth century whereby it surpassed its mission origin, to an institution with several individuals entwined to continental developments, and national political movements in the later decades. When it became a conventional case of National Party (NP) government control and influence, albeit with resistance from 1960, it forged another character, reflected by Afrikaner domination of academia and the rerouting thereof, for social and political control, whilst being aligned to apartheid policy. The remodelling of the institution in the era of democratic South Africa, germinated other facets, on various fronts as the institution had to reposition itself to new realities that continue to test centres of higher education, whilst still demanding clearer academic vision. That inclusive history of Fort Hare remains significant, but, an equally essential one for this paper is how this institution grasped its rich bequest, and endeavour to constitute its history department? Relying on empirical records from 1960 to 2015, this paper outlines distinct fortunes of Fort Hare's history department. Whilst the paper also stresses the significance of this discipline, particularly within fields of social sciences and humanities, it also cautions how overriding plans can also be dire for the subject.

Keywords: history, African Studies, University, government control, curricula review

1. INTRODUCTION

Many of those who have been involved in or have an interest in the history of education in the African continent, will be aware of the standing of the University of Fort Hare. Historians from parts of the world have often referred to this institution as one of the seed-beds of modern African nationalism.¹ It was founded in 1916, on the Tyhume River Valley hamlet of Alice, within the heartlands of the nineteenth-century eastern frontier, now inland of South Africa's Eastern Cape. The university expanded around a British fort – to which it still retains its current name, Fort Hare. From that date of 1916, as the first-ever university started for Africans in Southern Africa, it buttressed growing social networks of mission schools that drove western education for Africans, especially in the Ciskei and Transkei areas of the Cape, and, to some extent in Natal. Despite the establishment of Makerere University in Uganda during the early 1920s, Fort Hare remained the main institution offering higher education to Africans from eastern, central and southern Africa during the mid-twentieth century.²

In the administrative phases of Fort Hare, which were shaped by key events that influenced the history of this institution, prominent roles of individuals are yet to be accentuated. During the initial period of 1916 to 1950, whilst Fort Hare was known as the South African Native College linked to the University of South Africa (UNISA), and in the epoch of 1951 to 1959 when it was renamed the University College of Fort Hare and placed under the administration of Rhodes University, it educated several individuals

- 1 D Massey, *Under Protest: The Rise of Student Resistance at the University of Fort Hare* (Johannesburg: UNISA Press, 2010), pp. 27-88; L Switzer, *Power and Resistance in an African Society: The Ciskei Xhosa and the Making of South Africa* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), pp. 193-230; L Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains* (Claremont: David Philip, 2004), pp. 95-119; R Chapman, *Student Resistance to Apartheid at the University of Fort Hare: Freedom Now, a Degree Tomorrow* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016), pp. 2-49; J Grobler, *A Decisive Clash: A Short History of Black Protest Politics in South Africa, 1875-1976* (Pretoria: Acacia Press, 1988), pp. 160, 167-188; C Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality: The Public Lives of DDT Jabavu of South Africa, 1885 -1959* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1997), pp.47-49, 199-200; R Southhall, "The African Middle Class in South Africa 1910-1994", *Economic History of Developing Regions* 29 (2), 2014, pp.287- 310; D Williams, "African Nationalism in South Africa: Origins and Problems", *Journal of African History* 11 (3), 1970, pp.371 -383; D Williams, *A History of the University College of Fort Hare, South Africa, the 1950s: The Waiting Years* (Lewiston: Edward Mellen, 2001), pp. 3-10.
- 2 S Morrow and K Gxabalashé, "Records of the University of Fort Hare", *History in Africa* 27, 2000, pp. 481-497; P Johnson, *Control, Compliance and Conformity at the University of Fort Hare 1916-2000: A Gramscian Approach* (PhD, Rhodes University, 2013); pp.107-131; HR Burrows and ZK Matthews, *A Short Pictorial History of the University College of Fort Hare, 1916-1959* (Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1961), pp. 27-49; L Wotshela, *Fort Hare: From Garrison to bastion of Learning* (Johannesburg: KMM Review, 2017), pp. 5-29.

within the field of politics and leadership. Some of these participated within their respective countries, and also generally shaped African history.³ There were additionally several folks who were part of that earlier Fort Hare-trained generation who also made their contributions within and beyond the field of politics. One Zachariah Keodirelang Matthews, the first to be awarded a UNISA degree from Fort Hare, in the 1920s became a renowned scholar and participant in the growth of African Studies at Fort Hare from the 1940s. Matthews was guided by the London trained Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu - the first hired academic staff member in 1916. Jabavu was also the son of Tengo Jabavu, a key figure in the Cape African politics of the late 1800s to early 1900s, key author of the local newspaper, *Imvo Zabantsundu* and also one of the founders of Fort Hare.⁴

Matthews would also be accredited for his contributions in the African National Congress (ANC) draft of the Freedom Charter during the early 1950s, but the African Studies that he and Jabavu championed from the 1940s, became one of the core disciplines of humanities at Fort Hare for several decades and is discussed at length below. By the same token, during the decades of the 1930s and 1940s, Fort Hare also educated individuals who participated incisively in other fields of education and literature, the art, sports and administration. In that very same epoch, the institution became credited for producing the first generation of African women graduates, who, among others included; Gertrude Ntlabathi, Jane Gool, Ellen Pumla Ngozwana and Gaositwe Chiepe who also ventured onto fields of education, community services and diplomacy.⁵

Fort Hare's phase of 1960 and onwards, when the NP government's venture to control and ethnically divide Bantu Education, equally threw students and some employees to different fronts of either resisters who either endured torture or fled the country. As Fort Hare fell right under the Department of Bantu Education (DBE) in that era, some were absorbed into the fledgeling Bantu self-governance system, as the institution ostensibly also became autonomous from 1970 – a gloom period under the NP government, and in the late 1980s, under a Ciskei homeland rule.⁶ That epoch ushered Fort Hare into the mould of ethnic colleges to concretise the homeland policy, but the institution still redefined itself from apartheid shards during the early 1990s, coinciding with the advent of elective democracy in the country. In that

3 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 11-39; Morrow and Gxabalashe, "Records of Fort Hare", pp. 481-497.

4 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 1-7.

5 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 7-27.

6 Massey, *Under Protest*, pp. 159-195; P Johnson, "Dissidents and Dissenters: Student Responses to Apartheid at the University of Fort Hare", *Journal for Contemporary History* 44 (1), 2019 pp. 1-25.

epoch of the early 1990s, Fort Hare also became the receiver of archives of main African political parties, especially those of the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), which sustained the liberation movement even during banishment years of 1960 to 1990. It has been debated, those political parties' deposit of such vital records marked their recognition of the profound role Fort Hare played in shaping African politics, as much as the motivations to augment the institution's historical studies programs.⁷

Moreover, the new ANC government in its realignment of higher learning institutions in the early 2000s envisaged greater prospects and duly thrust Fort Hare into a converted spatial character - out of the Alice scabbard, to a multi-campus university.⁸ Not unexpectedly, dispersion of academic resources within that shifting university's social geography conceded its chromosome, and, as it is argued in the paper, challenged the survival of humanities' disciplines such as history. Essentially, the academic enterprise was equally stymied by permeating structural alterations. Given such contemporary developments, on the one hand, the richness of Fort Hare's origin enhanced by partially documented contributions and actions of its illustrious alumni on the other, there is a compelling case for this institution to have a robust and inimitable historical studies program. Yet, a puzzle remains on such prospect, notwithstanding potential interest, curricula and organisational challenges, which shaped long-term rendition of historical studies in the institution after the NP government takeover in 1960.

This paper thus scrutinises a 55-year existence (1960 -2015) of the history department at Fort Hare whereby it constituted itself organisationally, whilst defining its identity analogous with modelling its syllabi. In examining those aspects, the paper underscores the conforming vision of the history department with analogous Fort Hare management, backed by the government's Ministry of Bantu Education, which became Department of Education and Training (DET) by the 1980s. There are two arguments underpinning this paper's narrative: firstly, whilst the rich historical basis of Fort Hare suggests that this institution cannot be typically branded a Historical Black University (HBU), the NP government's direct control from 1960 merely tainted it with such status. As in most of the HBUs, Fort Hare's historical studies undergraduate syllabi conformed to the enduring charge of serving and legitimising white power. In that period from 1960 to the late 1980s, its syllabi was inclined towards European history - mostly facets of Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa, and experiences of whites in parts of the African

7 M Maamoe, *The Role of the Liberation Movements Archives in Shaping the History Writing in a post-apartheid South Africa* (DPhil, University of Fort Hare, 2019); B Maaba, *The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare* (DPhil, University of Cape Town, 2013).

8 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 65-69.

continent. Secondly, the syllabi also included snippets of African nationalism. Nevertheless, despite Fort Hare having individuals who were in the forefront of apartheid resistance especially from the mid-1960s to the 1980s, it was only during the mid-late 1990s that the institution's history department curriculum prioritised certain module(s) on African liberation processes, which were pertinent to studying South African history. That adaptation, as it will be illustrated, was still undone by structural trials that arose with the institution's realignment of its academic faculties and other units that had the remit to drive academic research during the early 2000s.

2. RATIONALISING THE WRITING AND STUDY OF HISTORY – CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICA, AND THE EARLY FORT HARE EXPERIMENT

It certainly made sense to develop historical studies from the onset in a university such as Fort Hare, which grew in a backdrop of, and amidst networks of human activities. Indeed, factors surrounding the origin of the institution manifested themselves to elicit and contribute to critical historiography of the country, and that of the African continent. Such historiography had to be honoured for its own sake, for several perceptions it could contribute within equivalent humanities and social studies. Peculiarly, there was no history department created for Fort Hare when boards of faculties for senate were formed for the drafting of regulations, courses and syllabuses for the very first time in 1923 whilst the institution was still referred to as the South African Native College.⁹ As is illustrated below, the history department would only be nominally created a decade later, during the late 1930s, and would still remain under-resourced for a lengthy time and thus was incapable of making many contributions even by the late twentieth century. By that period the writing of history in South Africa and worldwide, as well as the philosophy underlining such practice had transcended mere anecdotal of selected past events. History as a discipline already drew strength from other fields of the social, political, linguistic, environmental and even the natural sciences.

Such diversification in the writing of history recognised that aspects of the past can hardly be solely illuminated by analysis of their roots or origins. It is an appreciation that follows Edward Carr's insight from the early 1960s, coincidentally the starting point of the examination of the Fort Hare History Department for this paper. At that time, Carr had already noted that history was inexorably subjected to a whole range of questions since the subject

9 Burrows and Matthews, *Pictorial history of Fort Hare*, pp. 20-46; Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 11-12.

provides critical antimony between reality and discourse. Of course, in outlining the term history, one always has to differentiate between the actual events of the past (history as a reality), and the account of such events (history as a narrative). Since historians deal mainly with the latter process, they are invariably conscious that it generates dialogue. The exercise of reconstructing history does not merely include identification, selection and placements of crucial events in the context of time and space. Rather, there are several questions that mainly surround interpretation, representation and many forms of narratives.¹⁰

Those were and are still most of the questions that gripped both the historiography and the teaching of South African history in the country's academic institutions. Indeed, the criticism that history served or legitimised white power for much of twentieth-century South Africa was not groundless. Both school and higher education syllabi usurped aspects of the past and claimed to speak on behalf of diverse South African groupings in imbalanced narratives.¹¹ Nevertheless, as Sean Morrow points out, even if such kind of history existed in the country, it was not essentially hegemonic, or unchallenged. The challenge itself could be accredited to the unfettering and the critical nature of historical approaches, and ironically the interference of the apartheid state, which often strove hard to influence the discipline. The fact that certain authorities felt obliged to associate with chroniclers, or, at worst apologists, did not necessarily influence those who had an interest in the discipline to view studying history with distrust.¹²

In a country like South Africa, the writing and the representation of the past, as well as its study, has transcended several epochs. All being well, such exercise can be sustained for posterity. Even with dubious interpretation and representation of the country's history (or its past), contributors to that course during the twentieth century generated dynamic historiography. In fact after sustained dominance of the settler or British imperialism school of thought, and that of the Afrikaner nationalists on South African past, a broadly progressive and radical historiography emerged - from the classic liberal texts of the 1960s, to the Marxists – structuralist focus on South African economy in the 1970s and 1980s.¹³ The latter, which expanded historical scholarship in

10 EH Carr, *What is history?* (London: Macmillan, 1962), pp. 10-43.

11 L Wotshela, "The Discipline of History in Transitional South Africa: Transformation of Social Science in South Africa since 1994 - Disciplinary and Transdisciplinary Areas of Study", *Africa Institute of South Africa*, 74, 2004, pp. 77-82.

12 S Morrow, "An argument for History", *South African Journal of Higher Education* 14 (3), 2000, pp. 32-37.

13 See for instance, H Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap labour power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid", *Economy and Society* 1 (4), 1972, pp. 438-440; S Greenberg, *Race and Class in Capitalist Development: South Africa in Comparative Perspective*

many facets, even saw the emergence of the social history movement, and also coincided with the founding of the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) History Workshop. Conferences of that Workshop advanced the cause for radical school and thus drowned the hitherto existing liberal dominance.¹⁴ All the same, by the early 1990s the structuralist and radical historical framework also faced contest in the wake of postmodernism, as the latter placed weight on the “deconstruction of hegemonic truths”. That new articulation raised doubts on the acceptance of a single, or for that matter, a master narrative of the past to constitute history. Further questions continued being asked from that new thinking on the reconstruction of history. There were, and are still more regular, and valid questions; could history be defined as what happened, is it what historians narrate to us to have happened?¹⁵ Moreover, the re-examination of twentieth-century, South Africa continue to pose challenges on the encapsulation of local and social realities of a complex society within a set of hegemonic and persuasive generalisations.¹⁶ There were and are new commitments to rethink African representation in a post-colonial and post-apartheid Africa, where political power was now placed in African hands. Some of the debates are around, whose history really count and how best broad historical representation can be achieved? Thus new histories on previously hidden facets of African heritages, communities’ movements, liberation and democracy, as well as authority realignment processes are constantly being explored.¹⁷

Historical studies at Fort Hare, which as aforesaid was not even created in 1923, the first time boards of faculties for senate were formed for this institution had to continuously catch up with the evolution of the discipline. Ironically the first six drafted key course areas during that year had historical dimensions. They included education first, as the College was envisaged to

(Johannesburg: Yale University Press, 1981); D O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class Capital and Ideology in the development of Afrikaner nationalism, 1934 -1948* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983).

14 E Maloka, “Writing for them: Radical Historiography in South Africa and the Radical Other”, Transformation of Social Science in South Africa since 1994 - Disciplinary and Transdisciplinary Areas of Study, *Africa Institute of South Africa*, 74, 2004, pp. 83-89; C Van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic history of the Witwatersrand* (New York: Longman, 1982).

15 L Witz *et al*, *Unsettled History: The Making of South African Public Pasts* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2017), pp. 2-26; R Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 3-25; P Maylam, “Tensions within the Practice of History”, *South African Historical Journal* 33, 1995, pp. 1-12.

16 Witz *et al*, *Unsettled History: The Making of South African Public Pasts*, pp. 2-26.

17 For instance, South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET) Project on :The Road to Democracy in South Africa: 1960 to the 1990s. On the review of pre-colonial and colonial historiography, see also, J Bam *et al* (eds.), *Whose History Counts? Decolonising African Pre-Colonial Historiography* (Stellenbosch : Stellenbosch Press, 2018).

continue on an already opulent practice of teacher training for the Union of South Africa and thus consolidate what mission schools had already started. Secondly, the College opted to offer a course in agriculture to nurture existing methods of crop and animal husbandry. That emphasis had its touchy context, especially after the 1913 Land Act which set aside specific land portions for African occupation, and thus became the legislative framework for territorial segregation. From the 1920s and going forward, there was a realisation from the Union Government of the need to intensify ecological reclamation and agricultural intervention as a token strategy to sustain African reserve land. Fort Hare, as a South African Native College located mainly in an African area, was envisioned to be central in such role. Thirdly, the College also developed and offered a course on Physics and Chemistry - as part of a new pre-medical programme that was accepted by some universities for the pre-medical year or the first examination leading to a medical degree.¹⁸

The closest impression of historical studies, or a course that captured such a discipline from those created in 1923, included a Bachelor of Arts or Humanities degree, with one or several courses in law and history of African administration. At that stage, students in the field of humanities and law still followed careers in teaching or law profession. Others, however, were drawn into specialised practices as either clerks or interpreters in the Departments of Native Affairs or Justice. About ten years later, and from 1933 onwards, humanities introduced African Studies, and as aforesaid, that was initiated by Jabavu. On its inception, African Studies included Ethnic History of Africa, combined with Social Anthropology and African languages as part of a Bachelor of Arts degree. The fifth of the created courses had commercial focus, leading to business diplomas, with a less historical focus. Nevertheless, the sixth and the last one that entailed religious and later theological studies, was however similar to humanities with grounding in history. Given the long involvement of missionaries in the region and their involvement in the formation of the institution, a Theological qualification was introduced from the mid-1930s. From that point, Fort Hare trained ministers of diverse denominations. Crucially despite the emergence of independent African churches, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Fort Hare remained the exemplary product of mission and civilisation enterprise by the early to mid-twentieth century.¹⁹

That set of six different courses steered the institution forward, but, the demand emerged from below, particularly from some students to pursue subjects of their interests outside the designated courses, even without

18 Burrows and Matthews, *Pictorial history of Fort Hare*, pp.20-46; Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 11-12.

19 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 11-12.

adequate teaching staff to support them. As the institution became a crucible of continental interaction from the mid-1930s and onwards, there were clear moves by the students to expand or even radicalise the initially circumscribed curricular. For instance, students like Govan Mbeki and McLeod Mabude became the first to study Political Science despite having no teachers for their final year in 1936, and they went on to qualify for Bachelour of Arts (BA) degrees from UNISA. Likewise, Wycliffe Tsotsi, and his contemporary, Victor Mbombo, desired to study history and thus requested an appointment of a history lecturer, without succeeding. Ironically the then university rector, Alexander Kerr advised that they should consider studying Psychology instead. Tsotsi and Mbombo did not compromise, and that led to their self-study with the support of the Rhodes University History Department, and ultimate qualification in that discipline with UNISA.²⁰ Tsotsi's affinity with historical studies had partly to do with his original home of Glen Grey district, which was in the previous century affected by regulatory land laws. By mid-1930s, as government's new land bills and the obliteration of Cape African franchise loomed largely, he became associated to the All African Congress (AAC) that was also formed in the mid-1930s - as contesting African voice that essentially hatched the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM). Tsotsi would later become an active barrister and a defender of rural rights after completion of his studies during the 1940s.²¹

Meanwhile, student demand finally led to Fort Hare's creation of its History Department in 1938, a date that paradoxically coincided with centenary celebrations of the Great Trek. The timing may have been only coincidental or was indicative of the UNISA influence in the creation of academic departments. Nevertheless, the new Fort Hare history department couldn't even help students who aspired to study African history, epitomised in the case of Siphoh Makalima who was refused permission in 1940 to research the infamous 1856/7 cattle-killing.²² After the war, the department still remained under-resourced, with only one staff person, Hugh Chapman, formerly a war officer, whom Fort Hare had appointed Professor, and the only lecturer. From 1946 to 1952, Chapman ran the department on his own, and its syllabus during that time was slanted towards classical and modern European history.²³ With no African interest, it remained surpassed by the African Studies department, which sustained ongoing lessons on the Ethnic History of Africa. Matthews headed the latter since the retirement of Jabavu in 1944. Together

20 Massey, *Under Protest*, pp. 32-33.

21 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 19-20; L Ntsebeza, *Democracy Compromised: Chiefs and the Politics of Land in South Africa* (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2006), pp. 194-198.

22 Massey, *Under Protest*, p. 33.

23 Williams, *The University College*, pp. 9-11.

with Social Anthropology, Ethnic History of Africa was active in soliciting the interest of African students to the department of African Studies. Monica Wilson (nee Hunter), who lectured Social Anthropology at Fort Hare for two and a half years, whilst conducting field and ethnographical research during the years 1944 to 1946 made eternal sway. Her desires for the African Studies department to be a centre for research, accruing and processing knowledge were however discordant with Fort Hare, which at the time prioritised teaching to research. Equally, Wilson's anthropological work had by this period added vital contribution to liberal South African historiographical writing, especially her book: *Reaction to Conquest*.²⁴ Yet it remained unnoticed by Chapman's Fort Hare History department, at least in its first six years in office as it hardly taught South African history.

Change came with the addition of Donovan Williams to a lectureship position in the History department at the start of 1952. Williams had earlier studied History honours at Wits. He knew little on the Eastern Cape, but, was enticed by Robert Shepherd, one of the vanguards of Lovedale to research on the Scottish missions in the Ciskei and Transkei. In fact, such research exposed Williams into key historical routes that not only shaped his insights on contemporary Eastern Cape politics but, certainly also on aspects of African nationalism and general South African history. He also got backing from his counterpart Rhodes University History department, crucially during the aforesaid period when Fort Hare was under Rhodes's wing. In the eight years (1952-60), in which he accessed copious papers of the Glasgow Missionary Society that were largely held by the Lovedale Press, and scripts on some missionaries, which were held either at Fort Hare, or at Cory Library at Rhodes, he set about working on his doctoral research. Notably, he translated some of that research into teaching material, resulting in fresh syllabus on the study of the (eastern) frontier history, and the making of modern South Africa. Whilst the history department retained the theme on classical and modern Europe, Williams encouraged his students also to undertake African studies to gain familiarity on facets of African history. Yet the department remained poorly staffed, for much of his stay, since after Chapman's departure in 1954, Williams took over as Professor and Head of Department while singlehandedly providing lectures.²⁵

24 M Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest: Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936); S Morrow, "Your intellectual Son": "Monica Wilson and her Students at Fort Hare, 1944 – 1946". In: A Bank and L Bank (eds.), *Inside African Anthropology: Monica Wilson and her Interpreters* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 193 -223.

25 Williams, *The University College*, pp. 10-11.

The relevance of history and African Studies at the time was much aligned to the politics that were also steered by the NP government's racial discrimination legislation. The multi-racial nature of teaching staff and more so multi-ethnic composition of Fort Hare' student body during the 1950s decried the NP government policy. Both the ANC and the NEUM, which formed its Society of Young Africans (SOYA) during 1951, provided networks for active student political participation through branches of their youth leagues on campus. There were yet absurdities in these formations' politics, yet students were still drawn to African studies, and numbers were steadily growing for history. Students and the staff unity against the NP racial discrimination policy, however, meant the Fort Hare senate had to contend with an increase of political activity on campus in the course of the mid-1950s.²⁶ Crucially, that was also at the time the NP government was circling with its 1959 Extension of the University Act, and that would have major ramifications for Fort Hare as much as it would have for black institutions of higher learning countrywide.

3. GOVERNMENT CLOUT, CONCEDED HUMANITIES AND EMERGENT HISTORICAL STUDIES, 1960 -1990

The 1959 Extension of the University Act, the NP government legislation that launched its direct control and ethnical division of black institutions of higher learning is central for those who study segregated higher education in South Africa. With that piece of legislation, the NP government created four ethnic colleges, at Bellville in the Western Cape, Ngoye in Northern Zululand, one in Durban Westville, and fourthly in Turfloop in the Northern Transvaal. The four were correspondingly for students of official ethnic classification: Coloured, Zulu, Indian, and Sotho-Tswana.²⁷ Significantly for Fort Hare, a special 1959 Transfer Act was promulgated to approve the handover of that University College to the reigns of the NP government. That basically gave the DBE minister, Willem Adriaan Maree unlimited powers to control the employment of staff, council, senate and even advisory body members. In essence, the NP government was thrust in the overall administration and the daily running of the Fort Hare's affairs. The transfer act also clarified the overall intentions of the NP government to channel Fort Hare for Xhosa

26 Burrows and Matthews, *Pictorial History of Fort Hare*, pp. 39-56.

27 Extension of the University Act (No 45 of 1959), this Act also made it criminal for non-white student to register outside such institutions, without the written permission of the Minister of Internal Affairs.

speaking groups within its ethnic university strategy, and long-term Bantu self-governance policy.²⁸

In the year shortly leading to that fateful 1959 Transfer act, fault lines for commitments - by those who were for or against the impending NP government were delineated, and that enabled the DBE to decide on fortunes of staff amidst ongoing protest during September 1959. There are writings on the purge of those who clung to the old University College of Fort Hare and opposed the government takeover. Amongst many unsuccessful protesters were the then principal, Harry Raymond Burrows, and his staunch supporter Zacharia Keodirelang Matthews.²⁹ Their departure from Fort Hare in 1959 and 1960 constitutes some of the poignant writings on the transition history of the institution. Ultimately, the transfer act and changeover enabled Maree's DBE to control further hires, who mainly were Afrikaners, and more so, supporters of the NP government. Johannes Jurgen Ross, previously a law professor at the University of the Orange Free State became first government-appointed rector in 1960. Supervisory powers of UNISA were restored as that institution's principal, Simon Pauw, was made the first chairperson of an all-white Fort Hare council from 1960 onwards. The 1959 Transfer Act still retained UNISA to act as an examiner for all internally offered syllabi, as well as confer and award degrees. Conforming to segregation, the DBE separated the Fort Hare senate, into two units: one made strictly of white staff, and the other constituted of black staff, who served merely as an advisory arm.³⁰

The racial shift resulting from measured enlisting of white staff became clear, regardless of Fort Hare students being chiefly black, and the institution being located within what was delineated a Bantustan area. Indeed, this was a twisted paradox since the NP government's specious Bantu self-governance scheme hypothesised and emphasised the deployment of Africans within "ethnic black institutions". Instead, in the newly government-controlled Fort Hare, the proportion of black lecturing staff dropped visibly - from just under 45 per cent before 1960, to under 20 per cent during the mid-1960s. Clearly, the imperatives of political and ideological control took priority, as the NP government wrapped its tentacles around this University College, which it

28 Calendars of the University College of Fort Hare for the years 1960-69; Subsection (1) of section 35 of the 1959 Fort Hare Transfer Act (No 64 of 1959) vested power to the Minister of Bantu Education to provide Regulations in Connection with the Admission of Students to, with Control of Students at and the Discharge of Students from the University College of Fort Hare.

29 See for instance, Williams, *The University College*, pp. 511-560; Massey, *Under Protest*, pp. 159-168; Chapman, *Student Resistance*, pp.14-18; Johnson, "Dissidents and Dissenters", pp. 1-25.

30 Calendars of the University College of Fort Hare for the years 1961 to 1969; Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 40-41.

deemed was still beset with a long history of liberalism. The upshot of racial staff composition became crucial in ensuing years for academic profile and positions. There was only one African or black academic head from 23 departments of the five faculties: arts, science, law, commerce and education by 1965. They increased to only two after 1966, following the institution's golden jubilee in 1966. By that time faculties had grown to seven and departments almost double to 40 with the elevation of divinity and agriculture to faculty statuses.³¹

Equally, the openly-political NP government and now the DBE controlled Fort Hare were epitomised by the grip Afrikaner academics wielded across the seven faculties. The analysis of that occurrence across academic departments and their respective faculties remains valuable, but, for the limits of this paper emphasis is on humanities, and, especially African and Historical Studies. Humanities reorganised under Arts - one of the five faculties of the Ross administration after 1960 - encompassed most of the subjects that made the identity and institutional history of the institution. In fact, most of the names of student luminaries mentioned in the introductory section of the paper had in their course of stay at Fort Hare gravitated towards humanities. That academic strand was however hit hard by the purge and resignations of 1959 and 1960. For instance, African Studies lost all its staff members, Mathews, Sibusiso Nyembezi, Cecil Ntloko, and Don Mathews Mtimkulu, as they opted to resign in protest shortly before the government takeover in 1960. Donovan Williams, who developed and run the history department, solitarily, throughout the 1950s, was rusticated for his loyalty to the same group that rejected the government takeover. He too left Fort Hare and South Africa dejectedly for the United Kingdom in 1960.³²

Those resignations aided the new management to control politically-orientated humanities meticulously, as 12 of the 14 departments of the faculty of arts fell under the leadership of Afrikaner academics, who were trained in prominent Afrikaans medium universities. Only one of the 14 departments remained staffed by blacks in that faculty of arts, and it was the Bantu languages (retitled from African languages), which hitherto was part of African Studies. Obviously, Fort Hare being planned as a Xhosa ethnic university had to parallel the government policy and adopt Bantu languages to engender beliefs of separate cultures.³³ Predictably, the restored African Studies programme towed the NP government's line. Encapsulating the fundamental

31 Calendars of the University College of Fort Hare for the years 1961 to 1969.

32 Burrows and Matthews, *Pictorial History of Fort Hare*, pp. 39-56; Williams, *The University College*, pp. 571-576.

33 Calendars of the University College of Fort Hare for the years 1961 to 1969; Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp.12-40.

disciplines of Anthropology and Archeology, it also offered a course on “Native Administration”. The latter ensured a broad introduction to the study of African affairs linked to South African population structure and administration. Added to that program was curatorship of African collections, presented haughtily, whilst also portraying the obligation to preserve the “material culture of the Bantu”.³⁴ The syllabi of the department was harshly criticised by the only black internal teaching staff member, Curnick Ndamse in 1965, who, being in possession of senior degrees from Hartford and Trinity College felt estranged. Following his open remarks that “the white man controlled the education affairs of Africans”, Ndamse was immediately expelled by the Fort Hare senate. His appeal to the DBE Minister Maree was in vain, and predictably the course continued unchanged for the following two-and-a-half decades.³⁵

In the meantime, a restored history department, under the headship of Stellenbosch University-trained Professor, Colin Coetzee, who replaced Williams from 1960 until retirement in 1983, took a predisposition towards European history. There was however scope for adjustment of the history graduate program, from the earlier periodisation that encompassed classical history, in lieu of the existence of a separate, but, linked department of Classical (or Greek) Studies. Thus, the European history syllabi offered by Coetzee’s department started from the era of Mediaeval Europe to the immediate aftermaths of World War II. Continental African focus remained narrow, but snippets of early-European contacts with coastal and especially Southern African reaches, ranging from foci of Portuguese contacts with African groups and their infiltration of the region were offered. Syllabi also looked at the Dutch and British maritime epochs, as well as their processes of conquests, including polygonal roles of agencies and philanthropies like traders and missionaries. That Southern African study culminated with the divisive position of South Africa within the Commonwealth at the third-year level, essentially a contemporary theme at the time. Whilst endorsed reading texts for well over a decade on aspects of European history were general, such as those of Grant and Temperley, which offered a longitudinal study of Europe, Coetzee’s department relied mainly on the early liberal historians on South African themes. Mostly recommended reading included the volumes of the *Cambridge History of the Empire*, Walker’s *History of Southern Africa*,

34 Calendars of the University College of Fort Hare for the years 1961 to 1969.

35 Archives of the University of Fort Hare, held in the Alice Campus Registry Division (UFH, Alice, Registry): *Minutes of Senate Meeting* held 5 march 1965. Calendars of the University College of Fort Hare for the years 1961 to 1969, and those of University of Fort Hare, 1970s to 1994. Coincidentally the latter year was the last African Studies appeared encompassing Anthropology and Archeology in this institution.

and also the earlier works of de Kiewiet on South Africa.³⁶ Over time, the department also developed intensive optional papers from the same themes and scope, as well as readings for a largely taught history honours level in addition to a paper on history method and historiography. Gradually the honours program also introduced optional papers on struggles for parliamentary sovereignty in England during the seventeenth to eighteenth-century England, coinciding to what was taught for Rhodes history honours at that same time. Additionally, there were options on the American Revolution, and a focus on influences of British imperialism, by comparative study of constitutions of Canada, Australia and South Africa.³⁷

That syllabi hardly changed for much of the first two decades of Coetzee's tenure. His own interest being mainly on the militarisation and the fortification of South Africa's "Eastern frontier", he mainly embraced the conventional interpretation of frontier historiography.³⁸ His department hardly improvised to include teachings on the then emerging new history that entailed revision of writings on South Africa's past, particularly from the 1970s and onwards. Predictably the Fort Hare history department by the 1970s was deplored by some of its students to provide a Eurocentric view of African and especially South African history. Such view was in spite of Fort Hare being granted autonomy from UNISA at the beginning of that decade. Inside the lecture rooms, lessons continued to echo lingering traces of epochs of profound European domination. They stirred a persistent culture that created an illusory sense of the intrinsic supremacy of European-derived values and peoples. Some students felt Africa was largely presented as a European history, or candidly, the experiences of Europeans in Africa.³⁹

Of course, as in the earlier decades, Coetzee was still afflicted by inadequate human resource. In fact, throughout the first 13 years of his headship, he was allowed only one additional colleague in the history department. Meanwhile, Ross, the first government-appointed rector was succeeded by Johannes Marthinus De Wet (1968-1980), another staunch NP government devotee from Potchefstroom University. Taking forward a deemed autonomous Fort Hare, albeit, still under the coffers of the DBE, De

36 A Grant and H Temperley, *Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries 1789 to 1950* (London: Longmans, 1952); E Walker, *A History of Southern Africa* (London: Longmans, 1957); CW de Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa: Social and Economic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966).

37 Calendars of the University College of Fort Hare for the years 1961 to 1969.

38 See, C Coetzee, *Forts of the Eastern Cape: Securing a Frontier 1799 -1878* (Grahamstown: Self Published, 1995).

39 Interview: Author with M Vazi, King Williams's Town, 5 November 2019; Interview: Author with V Mona, Fort Hare, 22 January 2020. Both were respectively undergraduate students in the History Department during the mid-and the 1970s under the headship of Colin Coetzee.

Wet's tenure in the 1970s became even more delicate, not least because it was the era of fruition of the homeland policy, but, also student numbers were on the rise. Indeed the flipside corollaries of Bantu education were increasing percentages of secondary level pupils, despite diminishing quality that stemmed from underfunding and substandard teacher training.⁴⁰ Such numbers also impacted on ethnicised universities like Fort Hare, where student population topped a thousand for the first time from 1973. That also threw an upward curve for Coetzee's history department as the combined history undergraduates also exceeded 100 from that same year. Continuing being one of the school subjects, and being also taken by those who were either in the Arts or in teacher training programs, the study of history maintained some level of demand.⁴¹

Increasing numbers of undergraduates and lecturing demands coincided with the hatchling of the NP government's homeland policy. Transkei, which had fallen under the control of one Fort Hare alumnus of the 1930s, Kaiser Matanzima, had already accepted "self-governance" in the previous decade and was followed by Ciskei in 1972. Ciskei encompassed the area where Alice and Fort Hare were located. Earlier in 1968, Fort Hare had also decisively taken steps to increase its council members to include Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner of the Ciskei and the Regional Director of Bantu Education of that hatchling Ciskei Bantustan. It was clear that in the long-run the University would be remoulded to serve these Bantustans.⁴² That obligation and the added necessity to expand on the teaching scope of South African history, also reflected in the modifications Coetzee's department made on the syllabi from 1973 onwards. Additionally to what was already taught since the 1960s for the third-year course, two papers were developed: one on the study of forces for anti-colonialism in selected African countries. Another was on the historical method, the philosophy of history and historiography, which hitherto was offered at honours level only. Three additional, but, yet optional honours papers were also developed; one on population migration of the southern Bantu, the other on historical relationship and contact between the Bantu and the Khoisan, and thirdly on aspects of the history of either the Transkei or the Ciskei.⁴³

40 Beinart, *Twentieth Century*, pp. 160-161; L Wotshela, *Capricious Patronage and Captive Land: A Socio-political History of Resettlement and Change in South Africa's Eastern Cape, 1960 to 2005* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2018), pp. 36 -47.

41 Calendars of the University College of Fort Hare for the years 1961 to 1969; UFH, Alice, Registry, *Special Meeting of the Senate Executive Committee*, 24 August 1973; Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 49-51.

42 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 49-51.

43 Calendars of the University of Fort Hare for the years 1974 to 1980.

Those reforms allowed Coetzee to recruit additional services of fresh colleagues at lectureship level in 1973 and in 1977. In the interim period of 1975 to 1976, Fort Hare had also started a branch in Umtata (renamed Mthatha after 1995), which became the forerunner of the University of Transkei (UNITRA) from 1977 after that homeland accepted “independence” in 1976. The advent of UNITRA compelled Fort Hare to withdraw from the Transkei, but from 1979 it opted to open another division in Zwelitsha, largely for Ciskei civil servants. The latter external division obliged a further expansion of Coetzee’s history department as it also began to offer lectures in Zwelitsha. As it turned out, the new rector, John Lamprecht and another Afrikaner who succeeded De Wet in 1981, was even more sophisticated than his predecessor on the role Fort Hare was to play in augmenting the services of the Ciskei. Academic departments were grown to carry out the added tasks of expanding the vision of the university closer to the hub and activities of the new homeland (i.e. Ciskei), which also followed the Transkei example by accepting specious independence in 1981. The agreement was made that Fort Hare would continue being administered by South Africa’s DET for another five years, and only be eligible to Ciskei from 1987 onwards.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, by 1982 on the eve of Coetzee’s retirement, Fort Hare’s presence had started to gravitate further than the original site of Alice. Thus the University’s presence was felt within a significant administrative core of Ciskei, in the Zwelitsha area. Importantly, Coetzee’s history department had also by then grown to five full staff members who also had to alternate provision of additional classes in the Zwelitsha branch. It had essentially taken Coetzee 23 years to build and resource that history department with ample personnel, whilst during those years he also sat in critical positions at senate and council representation. In those 23 years, he had also witnessed the general growth in the number of Fort Hare students, from only 350 in 1960 to just over 3 000 by 1983. In that latter year, the overall history undergraduate class almost reached the 150 mark for the first time. Yet, the department battled to produce history honours, and, especially postgraduates or historical research students. Officially then, Coetzee was partially successful in setting up a merely teaching-focused history department at Fort Hare. From 1983, the work he had instilled fell under the headship of Dermot Michael Moore, whom Coetzee had personally drafted into the department during 1977.⁴⁵

Expectations on Moore were high within the department and the faculty of arts that he would enhance the groundwork Coetzee had laid. On his first arrival at Fort Hare during 1977, he already was considered a good teacher,

44 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 56-60; Wotshela, *Capricious Patronage*, pp. 51-52.

45 *The Fort Harian* (Fort Hare Newsletter), 8, January/April 1984.

who, in addition to a Master of Arts in History qualification also possessed Teacher's Diploma from Natal with distinction in English and principles of education. By 1982 he had advanced to complete a history doctorate with UNISA on a military subject – an examination of the role of the South African Air Force in the Korean War of the early 1950s.⁴⁶ Fort Hare promoted him from senior lecturer to professor in 1983, the year he also took over the departmental headship. Whilst the nature of his doctoral research didn't necessarily equip him with grounding familiarity on the Eastern Cape, and above all, Fort Hare, he still utilised it for further modification of the syllabi that Coetzee initiated. The adjustments he made were modest, only at third year and honours levels. In the former class, an extra optional paper was developed focusing on Cold War and new power politics in selected world cases during the post-WWII period. Clearly, that new theme had much to do with Moore himself applying part of his doctoral work. Whilst he also introduced a similar theme at honours level, he equally prioritised an introduction of additional paper on the modern Southern African region (with a focus on the twentieth century). Having taken two of the only three years he served as the head of the history department to amend the course, Moore surprisingly gave up the history headship in 1986, for a senior administration post. From 1986 he accepted an invitation to serve as a Fort Hare registrar academic. Thus, the history department was left without a head for the ensuing three years, from 1986 to 1989. In that same period, Moore also ascended further to the position of deputy vice-chancellor by 1988.⁴⁷

After the hiatus caused by the unpredicted resignation of Moore, Jan Christoffel Aucamp was appointed new head of the history department in 1989. Similarly to Coetzee, Aucamp had received training and his doctoral degree from the Stellenbosch University. Like Moore, his research was incompatible to the history of the Eastern Cape, and more so, mundane and not compatible to the Fort Hare heritage, but, focused on the history of the Cape soft grapevines.⁴⁸ His selection to the history department headship was indicative of the residual influence the Afrikaner led management of Lamprecht still held on Fort Hare in spite of the institution being technically handed over to the Ciskei administration in 1987. In any case, the idiosyncrasy of that Ciskei administration of Fort Hare was evidenced by the non-financial contribution of its government to the running affairs of the University, which were still eked

46 DM Moore, *The Role of the South African Air Force in the Korean War 1950 – 1953* (Dit Lit and Phil, UNISA, 1982).

47 *Calendars of the University of Fort Hare for the years 1983 to 1988; The Fort Harian*, 8 January/April 1984.

48 JC Aucamp, *Die Geskiedenis van die Kaapse Sagtevrugteedryf, 1896-1910* (Dit Lit and Phil, Stellenbosch, 1986).

up by South Africa's DET by 1989.⁴⁹ Whilst Fort Hare had aptly embarked on the mandate of serving the Ciskei homeland, the NP government was crudely grasping the price of sustaining such a homeland system. It was, however, forces that had built around mobilising student politics, and unionising Fort Hare workers for much of the second half of the decade of the 1980s, that would pose a new challenge to the university administration during the early 1990s. They in tandem also deferred Aucamp's headship of the history department before it even gathered pace. He was compelled to reset and would operate under a rapidly changing Fort Hare from 1990 and onwards.

4. TRIALS AND OPTIMISMS OF CHANGE: A CHALLENGED HISTORY DEPARTMENT AMIDST DEMOCRATISING AND EXPANDING FORT HARE, 1990 -2015

Following intense insurrection during the late 1980s, the Ciskei homeland faced meltdown. Its longtime self-imposed leader, Lennox Sebe, whom Fort Hare management once attempted in vain to appoint chancellor in 1982 was ousted in a bloodless coup by Oupa Gqozo, during 1990. Persistent aversion from a majority of students and staff towards the Ciskei government, also sped the end of Lamprecht's reign and his assistants, who included Moore, as workers and students alike took inspiration from the Gqozo coup as they turned on the senior management. Crucially, in that critical period of change, staff and students were conscious of the need for leadership that resonated with the altering political climate countrywide. Brian Gardner, an accountant and senior academic, who was seen as an impartial candidate by Fort Hare's Democratic Staff Association led by black academics, was appointed acting vice-chancellor. As it turned out, the switch from the Afrikaner dominated administration of Lamprecht, preceded a tumultuous national negotiation process towards political transition and development of a post-apartheid constitution. During the brief acting role of Gardner, the negotiation process had coalesced into a forum for diverse political parties, and groups to institute a platform for discussion - the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). Political parties had to reconstitute themselves whilst engaging in the CODESA talks, wherein the fate of homelands such as Ciskei, depended largely on the NP government's bargaining power. In any case, the fate of Ciskei was predestined to collapse due to continuing insurrection, and

49 Johnson, "Control, Compliance", pp. 240-241.

particularly, by the push for a unitary democratic state by the ANC, which had been unbanned together with other African political parties in 1990.⁵⁰

All of these developments, and especially the Fort Hare commotion, played in front of yet to be settled Aucamp. It did not help him that the number of teaching staff in the department was still low, and his staff thus remained challenged to run classes effectively in the external division in Zwelitsha. Amazingly, the fortunes of Fort Hare with student numbers continued to prosper as the demand for higher education from the black community also swelled in the early 1990s. Moreover, the university opened its doors to returning exiles, the majority of whom identified with this institution because of its long connection with the history of the liberation struggle in the country. To crystallise that image, Fort Hare inaugurated the ANC-aligned Sibusiso Bengu, a Professor of Political Science, as its first African vice-chancellor in 1991, thus ending the ephemeral leadership role of Gardner. Bengu's leadership role was also given vast support, when the ANC struggle veteran and Fort Hare alumnus of the late 1930s to early 1940s, Oliver Tambo was also appointed Chancellor. In his acceptance speech, Tambo invoked history, observing that Fort Hare had, "since its birth [been], a site of epic battles between forces of democracy and those opposed to it".⁵¹ It was clear that the ANC had committed to supporting Fort Hare, which it fittingly saw as a recruitment ground for future generations of activists in its remobilisation campaign. Outside Fort Hare, within the homelands of the Ciskei and the Transkei, the main political parties tussled for influence. In the Eastern Cape, tertiary institutions like Rhodes, UNITRA (now Walter Sisulu) and even Port Elizabeth (now Nelson Mandela) universities, the ANC ramped up its enlistment campaign during this early-1990s epoch.⁵²

One major incident for historical studies at Fort Hare then, was the decision taken by various liberation movements at Devonshire hotel, in Johannesburg during 1991, to deposit their respective records at this university in recognition of its long association with the struggle history. The ANC, at the forefront of that decision, led the way and sent its first consignment of records to Fort Hare during September 1992. In his receipt for the university, the new vice-chancellor, Bengu laid down the gauntlet to the institutions associated with the teaching and writing of the country's history:

50 Wotshela, *Capricious Patronage*, pp. 52-54; *Fort Hare* pp. 62-63; L Wotshela, "The Fate of the Ciskei and Adjacent Border Towns, Political Transition in a Democratising South Africa, 1985-1995". In: SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Volume 4, Part 3 (Pretoria: Pan Africa Press, 2019), pp.1855 – 1899.

51 Massey, *Under Protest*, p. 285 (see especially, the South African and Fort Hare timeline).

52 Wotshela, *Capricious Patronage*, pp. 296-297; *Fort Hare* pp. 62-63; Wotshela, "The Fate of the Ciskei", pp. 1855 -1899.

...this is the opportunity we have all been waiting for, and there will never be a better chance for us to relook at our country's bitter past, whilst we will be at the same time armed with prospects of rewriting and correcting the account of such past. It is the moment to appreciate those who are in the position of teaching the history of the country....⁵³

The move to deposit the records by the ANC, and certainly Bengu's approval speech, nudged the history department to react with the purpose of including into its syllabi some of the key aspects that were foreseen to be appropriate for South Africa's liberation history. Key challenges however still lingered as the arriving ANC and other political parties consignments remained uncatalogued to be effectively utilised for proper scholarly referencing. It remained so, for almost another decade, as the Howard Pim Unit of the Fort Hare library had to earmark two of its key members to prioritise cataloguing of the various records of the worldwide ANC missions into a proper archive. Meanwhile, in spite of readjusting syllabi on modern South Africa to include themes of resistance and rise of African nationalism, at third-year level, from 1995 onwards, Aucamp's department remained tormented by staff shortage. From 1993, it lost one of its lecturing staff Nico Jooste, yet to administration. Thus by 1994, Aucamp had only two further staff: one senior lecturer, Drusilla Yekela, whom Coetzee trained and appointed in 1973, and one lecturer Tim Goetze, whom Moore initially employed to teach in the Zwelitsha branch during the 1980s. The three staff members were only supported by one tutor, who also had administrative errands for the department. Critically, African Studies, which continued the theme on African Ethic history since prior 1960, was disbanded at the end of 1993. Thus, Anthropology and Archeology stood as independent departments from 1994 and swung a few students who had a continental interest to undertake history. As a result, overall graduate numbers for Aucamp's department remained steady, as they surpassed 200 by early 1995.⁵⁴

The advent of the Govan Mbeki Research Resource Centre (GMRRC) at Fort Hare from 1995, also widened the dimension of historical studies. Under the leadership of a valued historian, Sean Morrow, GMRRC had the mandate to develop research capacity in the humanities and social sciences and thus encouraged interdisciplinary research with students based in different fields. Some of the students had majored in history, and while

53 Bengu Files, held at the Howard Pim Library, University of Fort Hare; See, Unpublished handwritten notes on acceptance of the ANC Liberation Archives, 23 September 1991, pp. 1-2.

54 General Prospectuses of University of Fort Hare, years 1990-1995; Interview: Author with M Maamoe, Fort Hare, Alice 4 August 2018. Mosoabuli Maamoe was initially one of the Howard Pim Library staff member who catalogued and prepared the ANC archive.

Aucamp's department struggled for staff to assist them with postgraduate studies, they moved to the GMRRC where they received supervision. Several of those students were prepared to generously assist in the sorting of inbound donated liberation archives, gain first-hand insight on contents, for the benefit of their research interest. Others were also engrossed by the records of Fort Hare itself, which had been generated on this institution in the course of its history. Their other focus areas were on aspects of social history and local art. Those diverse interests resulted in regular seminars, several dissertations and papers, ranging from topics of indigenous art in the Eastern Cape to records of Fort Hare, to activities of liberation movements in exile such as the ANC in Tanzania and the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO).⁵⁵ Inopportunely, the history department that could have profited from collaborating with the GMRRC continued with rendering its syllabi in isolation. That dog-in-the-manger attitude to cross-disciplinary scholarly work cost it an opportunity for the department to bolster its postgraduate programme. It thus remained a strictly teaching, rather than, research aspiring department.

Meanwhile, Bengu's tenure as the vice-chancellor came to an end midway in 1994, on his appointment as the first Minister of Education in the cabinet of Nelson Mandela. His successor Mbulelo Mzamane, a scholar of English and African literature, inherited most of the financial woes that largely arose from wage and salary bills adjustments for equitable remuneration. Besides, the majority of nearly 6 000 students of Fort Hare by 1994/5 came from poor homes. Whilst the Mandela government in its initial Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) catered for Tertiary Education Financial Students Assistance (TEFSA), non-payment of fees remained rife. That financial instability tested Mzamane's tenure, but, he like his predecessor, Bengu, opened further prospects for history and to a large extent curatorship. He made moves during his tenure in 1996 to 1998 to centralise holdings for all heritage and liberation records, including the old African collection that had been part of Anthropology whilst under African Studies. Some of that material also emanated from the Centre for Xhosa Literature and that, along with artwork, artefacts and exhibitions were processed to be accessible for academic research, and the broader public. There were also efforts to catalogue university records that included not only those of institutional bodies such as senate and council, but, also those of the institution alumni. Whilst those processes were at play, the PAC followed the ANC and also

55 Morrow, "An Argument for history", pp.32-36; B Maaba, *The Students of Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, 1978 -1992* (MA, Fort Hare, 1999); S Morrow and N Vokwana, "Shaping in dull dead earth their dreams of riches and beauty": Clay Modelling at eHala and Hogsback in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, South Africa", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27 (1), 2001, pp. 137-161; Morrow and Gxabalashé, "The records of Fort Hare", pp. 481-497.

deposited much of its collection at Fort Hare in 1996. At the beginning of 1997, Mzamane's administration consolidated all those national treasures in the new National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre (NAHECS), which coincidentally was opened by Bengu, in his capacity as the Minister of Education. Predictably, on that occasion, Bengu re-entreated Fort Hare's commitment to history, and history teaching in his speech.⁵⁶ Aucamp's tenure, however, came to an end during that very same 1997. After almost eight years of having been the head, there was no structural change in the department. Significantly his staff compliment had diminished to what Coetzee and Moore held before him. Nevertheless, he still navigated the department at a critical period of Fort Hare's managerial change.

Mzamane's administration demonstrated its solemnity for a new history department head by outwardly advertising the vacancy. That did not deter one of the then internally contracted lecturers, Timothy Stapleton to apply. Stapleton, a Canadian who had an interest on Southern Africa already held a Dalhousie University History doctorate. He had written a monograph on his research on Maqoma, one of the renowned local Xhosa Chiefs of the nineteenth century, around the Kat river, west of the Tyhume river that encompasses Fort Hare. He, however, lost out to John Hendricks, who also had a Michigan history doctorate and teaching experience from the University of the Western Cape (UWC) where he did his graduate studies. Hendricks eloquently stated his interest on aspects of African nationalism and intellectualism that equally complemented the heritage of Fort Hare. He clinched the history headship post by underlining the necessity of including the inbound liberation archives into the evolving history syllabi.⁵⁷ Indeed once he assumed duty from 1998, he committed his staff to the drafting and addition of two pertinent modules at third-year level. One focused on a comprehensive history of the liberation struggle in twentieth-century South Africa, and the other on the significance and value of Oral History, as well as its debates. For the same third-year level, a module on the Eastern Cape history was augmented, and given a longer scope from initial contacts of European groups with local people up to facets of the twentieth century. By the end of 1999, Hendricks had upped his staff to five persons, with an additional departmental secretary. Despite the teaching staff having to provide lessons at the external Zwelitsha branch, it was a larger department than at the end term of Aucamp.⁵⁸

56 Mzamane files, held at Howard Pim Library, University of Fort Hare; See, unpublished handwritten notes on the Official Opening of NAHECS, 24 September 1997; Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 64-66.

57 Interview: Author with D Yekela, Fort Hare, Alice, 2 March 2016.

58 See, General Prospectuses of Fort Hare, 1999 to 2001.

Still, there remained a challenge with the falling number of learners as history continued to face competition as a subject of choice, from other social sciences subjects, such as sociology and political sciences. Ironically, although history was seen as a struggle-orientated school subject during the apartheid years, it was waning in the school syllabus of the mid-to-late 1990s since it became subsumed into social studies to Grade 9, and became one of the optional subjects in Grades 10 to 12.⁵⁹ As mystifying as the decline of history in the post-apartheid school curriculum was, that occurrence still translated to the overall decline of potential history graduate student numbers. Indeed, in spite of the syllabi revisions, the overall graduate number of Fort Hare history department dipped to below 200 in 1999.⁶⁰ Significantly, Fort Hare was not alone during this epoch of the late 1990s in the permeating challenge of waning interest in the discipline of history. In universities where history had always been presented and pursued solely for teaching purposes, it could not stay alive. Scholarly, Paul Maylam also noted organisational and other intellectual difficulties, most certainly the unease generated by the postmodern deconstruction of hegemonic truths which manifested to self-doubt among historians at the time.⁶¹ There were grave consequences for other institutions. For instance, history was almost wiped off the then University of Port Elizabeth (UPE) curriculum after the rationalisation of academic disciplines in that institution in 1999/2000. Whilst it partially remained a component of the school of humanities and social sciences, it was reduced to an auxiliary course often taken by students to fulfil their programmes rather than those who sought to pursue it at postgraduate level.⁶²

Significantly for Fort Hare, Mzamane's administration had in that same period of 1998/9 conversely fallen, largely because of financial bungling that was amplified by the ongoing student and worker protests, amidst impending cutbacks.⁶³ Whereas Mzamane was ultimately sacked, the salvaging of that crisis ironically impacted further on the history department. The rescue process had initiated a strategic plan for change, and repositioning of the university. Termed *Strategic Plan 2000*, it was essentially a corporate governance tool that facilitated rationalisation and realignment of faculties, whilst creating centres for specific services and outputs as well as austerity on financial control. Derrick Swartz, an academic appointed vice-chancellor after Mzamane's demise, put into use the *Strategic Plan 2000* during the early 2000s. One of the centres that emerged with the *Plan* impacted on

59 Morrow, "An Argument for History", pp. 32-36.

60 Interview: Author with D Yekela.

61 Maylam, "Tensions within History", pp. 1-12.

62 Wotshela, "Discipline of History", pp. 77-82.

63 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 64-65.

research and production of history postgraduate students. As it transpired, the GMRCC was modified to a Govan Mbeki Research and Development Centre (GMRDC), with wider remit to drive and govern university research across faculties. New dean of research post, with managerial staff was attached to that GMRDC.⁶⁴ Morrow, who for several years led events of the preceding unit, whilst supervising several history postgraduates was snubbed for the new deanship for another academic, who hitherto had no affairs to the unit. Essentially the history department lost all the foregoing postgraduate research activities connected to Morrow's scholarly expertise. Fort Hare would eventually lose Morrow to the Human Science Research Council during the early 2000s.

Concurrently, one of the new faculties the *Plan* yielded was termed African and Democracy Studies (ADS), which coalesced hitherto three faculties: arts, in which the history department was located, law, which was one of the largest staffed, but, had its administrative glitches at the time, and lastly theology that Mzamane had attempted to expunge, during 1998. To save funds, positions of the previous three deans, and support staff were reduced to one. Hendricks who was partly involved in the conceptualisation of the *Plan*, duly opted for the new deanship of the ADS, abandoned history headship and took one experienced history lecturer, Tim Goetze, with him to act as the new faculty manager. With financial austerity measures in place, the *Plan* also delimited what were deemed viable, or, not so viable, academic departments – strictly measured by thresholds of teaching and research outputs.⁶⁵ At the start of 2003, such measures endorsed only two teaching staff in the history department whose overall undergraduate numbers had continued to shrink to less than 150. The syllabi that was amended and adopted during Hendricks' tenure as the head remained however unchanged. As a result, those two remaining lecturers had to continue offering lessons in the main Alice campus and in the branch that had now relocated from Zwelitsha to Bisho (renamed Bhisho, after 1995), for proximity to the provincial administration headquarters. Basically, the two academics had to carry out the teaching load of modules that were initially developed for five teaching members. Whilst the department struggled for continuity, the only one remaining senior staff, Yekela, who, as aforesaid had served the department since 1973, also doubled as the acting head. With her new colleague, Luvuyo Wotshela, who had freshly been recruited after a year of postdoctoral research, with Oxford,

64 UFH, *Strategic Plan 2000*.

65 UFH, *Strategic Plan 2000*, pp. 62-63.

and Nelson Mandela Universities, they solely ran the department in Alice and in the Bisho branch for the five years from 2003 to 2007.⁶⁶

It has to be underlined; the 2000 *Plan* did invest more money on strategic planning than on core scholarship programmes. Its end goals, though exquisite, were not easy to realise. Importantly Swartz's administration also used the *Plan* in managing the integration of the East London Rhodes campus that Fort Hare inherited in 2004. That was part of university mergers conceived and applied by then Minister of Education Kader Asmal, who succeeded Bengu. Fort Hare's inheritance of the Rhodes East London campus also raised a key question, as to how the university was to deal with the new identity of a multi-campus model. As the social geography of Fort Hare was vastly changing, and no longer concentrated in Alice, clear thinking was essential for the moving of academic programmes across the divides of spatial campus. To partially solve the problem, the new Bisho division was remoulded to focus on programmes related to public administration and governance, to harmonise with the locality of civil servants in that administrative area.⁶⁷ Thus pressure was taken off humanities disciplines to duplicate in Bisho. Nevertheless, the precise location of departments of social sciences and humanities between Alice and East London for Fort Hare became even a bigger challenge. The previous Rhodes East London division, which started in the 1970s for mainly commercial courses, had by 1990s gradually integrated, education, social sciences and humanities.⁶⁸ Its merger with Fort Hare amplified enormous overlap, or, duplication of academic fields across different spaces.

Thus after 2004, a replica history department was started for the newly merged East London campus. For the following few years it had no staff, and thus relied on sporadic lessons by Hendricks, who already was immersed with deanship. It also depended on the expertise and part-time teaching of Gary Minkley, a historian who after a stint in the University of Western Cape history department had returned to East London as a senior researcher in the newly formed Fort Hare Institute of Social and Economic Research (FHISER), under the directorship of a renowned Anthropologist, Leslie Bank. In the meantime, the lifespan of the ADS faculty came to a hasty end at the start of 2005, with the addition of social sciences and humanities from the former Rhodes East London division. That integration yielded a Faculty of Social

66 Interview: Author with D Yekela. I personally experienced these developments whilst teaching history in the Alice campus and the Bisho branch from 2003 until my departure to the Department of Geography and Environmental Science in the second half of 2007.

67 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 65-67.

68 P Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904 – 2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History* (Grahamstown: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, 2017), pp. 246-247.

Sciences and Humanities (SSH), for both East London and Alice campuses. The new SSH faculty still included theology, and Hendricks retained its overall deanship, but law, which hitherto was covered in the ADS, moved to set up its separate faculty.⁶⁹

All these configurations were obligatory but did not instantly enhance graduate history teaching, and production, either in Alice, whose staff continued to be in short supply, or, in the replica department in East London that was yet to have its own staff allocation. In fact, Minkley, who partially helped with teaching in East London, was inundated further after 2006, as he became director of postgraduate studies. That new position augmented functions of the GMRDC, since it had a duty to organise and administrate postgraduate research activity across faculties. Opportunely, after 2007 the East London history department received its first staff allocation, and that led to a lectureship position for Chris Andreas, who then was also working on his doctoral research with Oxford University. A sole appointee in East London, Andreas relied on relic help he could solicit from Hendricks and Minkley, but he was equally overawed by the uncoordinated setup between East London and Alice departments. Nor was the situation getting easier for Yekela, who amidst headship obligations, which were run from the Alice front, and her continuing doctoral studies, also had to deal with staff turnover and shortage. From mid-2007, she had lost Wotshela to an internal senior lectureship appointment in the Geography and Environmental Science department. After a hiatus of over a year, her Alice history department finally got lectureship replacement that was given to Thozama April, who then was also starting with her doctoral research with UWC. She would remain with the department until 2016 but again would receive a better offer elsewhere on completion of her doctoral work.⁷⁰

Cognisant of redeveloping a history postgraduate base, Yekela in the meantime motivated with the support of Hendricks for the appointment of Jeff Peires, as an adjunct professor for the history department. An esteemed scholar of the Eastern Cape history, with experience from teaching at Rhodes, and UNITRA, as well as work in the post-1994 government, Peires had familiarity with the heritage of the Tyhume River that linked to prominent roles of the historical Lovedale and Fort Hare. From 2008, whilst he was heading the Cory Library for Historical Research at Rhodes, he started assisting with supervision of Fort Hare postgraduates. He preferred relating more with the Alice site, where he also had acquired insight on the archives of the liberation

69 General Prospectus, University of Fort Hare, 2005.

70 General Prospectuses, University of Fort Hare, 2006 -2008; Social Sciences and Humanities Prospectuses, University of Fort Hare , 2007-2010; Interview: Author with D Yekela; Interview: Author with T April, Fort Hare, Alice, 3 September 2020.

movement, which had been deposited, catalogued and steadily transferred to NAHECS by 2010. Yet even with his gifts, Peires did not find the under-resourced and poorly-staffed Alice history department easy to assist. His intermediate and long-term objectives of mentoring postgraduates were consistently thwarted by arbitrary requirements to assist in undergraduate programmes. At times, faculty administration was lurid, and blurry terms for adjunct professorship often led to long periods without even financial rewards. Whilst he was content to assist out of altruism, and out of passion for historical studies, he considered the associated administrative needs stifling to the academic exercise. Yet, he put more time to the task, especially after 2012, when he had vacated the Cory Library to supervise a few Fort Hare masters and doctoral students.⁷¹

Meanwhile, the FHISER made an impact in the East London department with history postgraduate supervision. From 2008, that unit had adequate infrastructure, which included a computer laboratory, reading and seminar rooms. It attracted an array of postgraduate students from fields of the social sciences and humanities, including those studying history. From 2009, Hendricks' faculty also motivated for the awarding of the National Research Foundation (NRF) SARCHI Chair on Social Change, to Minkley, with anticipation of augmenting postgraduate research in the faculty. Some of Minkley' students also continued using the FHISER research resources. Operating similarly to, but on a far larger scale than the former GMRC under Morrow in Alice, FHISER and Minkley's Chair flourished. From 2010, FHISER also prepared to offer a two-year Masters degree in African Studies, in partnership with the Centre for African Studies at Oxford University in the United Kingdom. That dedicated interdisciplinary research and postgraduate training, combining course work and dissertation qualified students a Fort Hare Masters degree in Social Science, focusing on either Southern African Cultural or Gender Studies. It also included some elective modules, such as heritage and social transformation, as well as history and liberation in Africa, which were attractive to those who previously were trained in history.⁷² The program was certainly different from the earlier Fort Hare African Studies that orbited around Anthropology and Archeology, as well as African Ethnic History and Administration, which was pitched at undergraduate level. To a large extent, the new Masters on African Studies was also viewed by former history students as a vehicle for branching out to practically oriented career paths, than the mere practice of history itself.

71 Interview: Author with J Peires, Alice, Fort Hare, 25 September 2019.

72 See the Social Sciences and Humanities Prospectuses, University of Fort Hare, 2010 to 2015, especially FHISER African Studies Programme.

In spite of those advances, a 2010 review of academic departments across faculties, led by then Fort Hare's office of the deputy vice-chancellor, Rob Midgely, who handled academic affairs, was damning on the history department as it was for the majority of departments in the SSH faculty. The *2010 Review Report* stressed that history had to invent ways of increasing its student numbers and also address the declining continuity of students majoring in the discipline. The Report was especially critical of the Alice numbers, where the whole undergraduate enrolments had declined to less than 130 by 2010, and postgraduates to an absolute minimum of five. East London, which had the use of Minkley's SARCHI Chair, and the FHISER resources, fared much better with 21 postgraduates, notwithstanding that the overall undergraduates were still less than 200 in that department. Thus, the *Review Report* was categorical that the then existing model for history was not feasible and henceforth suggested possible solutions. One of those was a potential union of history with NAHECS, and the likewise afflicted departments such as music and fine art, to establish a School for Cultural and Heritage Studies. Such option, the *Review Report* underlined, would ensure the active utilisation of the archives held at NAHECS, which would offer the prospect for application of a chair in liberation studies. Another related possible solution the *Review Report* offered, was for a development of a teaching and research niche around an Eastern Cape history, heritage studies and the archives. In that respect, it was emphasised that the department should also work closely with the department of library and information science. Additionally, to these suggested options, there were other generic highlighted challenges, like the non-equivalent access to pertinent resources, such as library holdings, which were common for several departments operating across campuses. The lack of a community engagement strategy, which was aligned with the University policy, was also emphasised.⁷³

Whilst for much of the following five years after 2010, the history department braced itself to attend to the pointed-out problems and suggested solutions, there were still lingering challenges. Firstly, NAHECS, which held various collections of the liberation archives was undergoing its own re-organisation despite its role being hinted by the *2010 Review Report* for partnership in the revival of history, and other SSH faculty departments. Although its physical records were used in previous years by many scholars, who worked on facets of liberation history, the Centre had embarked on a long-term strategic mission of digitising its holdings. That endeavour which was funded privately was pressed by the pending ANC centenary

73 *Academic Review Report*, University of Fort Hare, 2010, pp. 130-133.

celebrations. That organisation firstly envisaged showcasing the legacy of its first 100years during 2012, via a sampled digital archive.

Nevertheless, with the availability of further funding, the digitisation exercise carried beyond the initially sampled material as the ANC opted to extend the task to most of its mission records held at NAHECS, and much of that exercise continued until depletion of funds by the end of 2018. Logically the ANC-impelled digitisation also encouraged a rethink from NAHECS about spreading the same exercise to holdings of other organisations to harmonise future digital accessing of records for potential use, for either curricular revision or for specific scholarly outputs. Essentially by 2015, which is the end scope of this article, the digitisation of liberation records was not yet harmonised. It is worth underlining that the rethinking from NAHECS to extend digitisation for harmonised access was encouraged by Mvuyo Tom, who since 2008 had replaced Swartz as vice-chancellor. Tom had also seen the value of revisiting Fort Hare's history in the process of consecrating the institution's first 100 years in 2016. For him, that groundwork for an imminent Fort Hare centenary required not only digitisation and curatorship that had to yield physical and digital permanent exhibition of Fort Hare's history but constant writings on several life histories of illustrious alumni of the institution.⁷⁴ Thus from 2012, he and Michael Somniso, who meanwhile had replaced Hendricks as the SSH faculty dean, facilitated the transfer of Wotshela to the headship of NAHECS, for primarily the documentation of that history.

The second inhibition for the proposed revival of history stemmed from within the history department itself. Certainly, the staff complement that consisted of only two full-time members in each of the campuses was too low for those academics to embark on a far-reaching revision of syllabi and overly-innovative alluring strategies, as advised by the *2010 Review Plan*. Yet the staff from both campuses concentrated their energies on the aspect of modifying curriculum from 2011. Student numbers, however, did not change much by 2015, and would only rise after 2018, with the current Department of Basic Education's decision to make history compulsory at school level and thus the surge in the number of trainee teachers taking the history undergraduate, but not intending to major. Nevertheless, in the interim period, the teaching staff improvised. One of the entry-level modules that focused on the origins of global and African past was standardised to be comparable to countrywide universities. The staff also explored options of technology-

74 Those writing and documentation errands have resulted in, L Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, and W Nkuhlu: *A Life of Purpose* (Johannesburg: KMM Review, 2014); P Johnson *et al*, *Fort Hare 1916-2016: A Social, Political and Intellectual History* (Johannesburg: KMM Review, Forthcoming 2021). The physical permanent Fort Hare Exhibition is displayed at the De Beers Art Gallery at the Alice campus.

enhanced teaching and learning, as the university also introduced the Blackboard learning management system from the year 2012. Elective papers and or themes on the state of archives and their use in historical research and writing were introduced. Students at the Alice campus consistently had the opportunity of undertaking practical lessons on the preparation and use of the archive as they regularly visited and witnessed the inventorisation process as the records were prepared for digitisation.⁷⁵ Overall, the departmental team strove to adopt a pedagogical tool that made the curriculum more diverse and thrilling to entice the students to the history discipline. Such an approach was born out of the realisation that uninspiring historical presentation cannot only be arid for the student but can also be distressing for the teacher.

5. AN UNFULFILLED POTENTIAL – A SHORT CONCLUDING REMARK

There is, on the one hand, clear disparity between innate heritage-based from Fort Hare's generational luminaries, who have clearly shaped annals of this institution's past, and, on the other, trialled, but, otiose efforts to set up its historical studies or well-resourced history department. The basis of the former is premised on the genesis, and the evolution of Fort Hare, and whilst processes that impelled the latter were explicitly connected, they also derived from an array of other facets: from organisational phases of the institution, which were shaped by regimes whose plans had sways on academic routes, to roles of internal structures that constantly navigated pathways of scholarly disciplines. Whilst the DBE managed Fort Hare tried via ethnic composition of academic departments or faculties to control scholarship route, and whereas the history department during the first two decades under Coetzee stayed less-resourced, the history course had to be introduced. As a core humanities subject, it was still seen by the university senate to be related to other disciplines, such as the African Studies that included anthropology, and others like the political, geographical, economic and literary studies that too had historical dimension. Coetzee, and his successors, Moore and Aucamp adhered to generic syllabi applicable to several countrywide universities, but, were perhaps contemptuous to initiate curricula that was inwardly drawn from the intrinsic Fort Hare legacy. That option was probably too premature for their DBE and DET dominated reigns, whilst it is safe to say, Aucamp who was the

75 University of Fort Hare, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Document Submitted by the History Department of Objectives of Improving Academic Profile and Financial Sustainability, July/August 2011, pp. 1-11.

latest of the three had prospects, but, was overawed by major administrative change and opted to cling to the how things stood.

The last period of 1990 to 2015, first underpinned by changes from tireless Afrikaner-led organisation, to a fledgeling ANC one, emulated countrywide political change, but, became equally anomalous for a thriving history department, irrespective of the importance of the weight of history. Indeed, South Africa's difficult past spawned prospects for extended historical and other enquiries, and, on that end, the inclusive nature of liberation struggle, with facets of African nationalism broadened the scope for historical research. Fort Hare has the enviable position of being the custodian of sources for the production of such history. Such sources have contributed enormously to the growing new historiography in the country. Repeatedly, the importance of that history was and has been invoked on several fronts, within the Fort Hare site; from the voice of the celebrated struggle veteran and alumnus such as Tambo, to Bengu, its very first African vice-chancellor. Yet the challenge of creating a well-resourced and alluring history department remained less successful throughout that 25-year period for the respective heads. At the base of that test, instability, which was often prompted by lack of continuity, tested the under-resourced department. At the apex of the scale, neoliberal aspects of governance and strategic planning directed at regulating rising costs of university management did not have tolerance for marshalling a struggling history department. In that ever-changing Fort Hare environment, the ever-truncating history scholarship continued operating under duress. As this paper is going to press, it has been revealed that the Department of Higher Education and Training has moved to consolidate academic units only in the campus of affiliating majority students. The upshots of that move is that, the Alice campus that produced the aforementioned luminaries but has fewer numbers of graduate students to East London may in the not so distant future ironically be without a history department. Hopefully, for the continued protection of the identity of Fort Hare such outcome will be avoided.