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Title: 'Diamond-ladies and a dream of hell' - Fah-fee, and the coloured working class of Johannesburg 1918-1936.

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'DIAMOND LADIES AND A DREAM OF HELL': FAH-FEE AND THE COLOURED WORKING CLASS OF JOHANNESBURG 1918-1936

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The abiding concern of social historians to examine how newly proletaranised working classes ameliorated the harsh conditions which they faced did not originate simply from a desire to rescue class actors from what E.P. Thompson described as the "enormous condescension of posterity".(1) The overarching objective of social history has rather been to explore the role of human agency in macro-structural processes such as capital accumulation and class formation. In so doing, social historians have sought to arrive not only at a more accurate reconstruction of these macro-historical processes, but also at a deeper understanding of how class and group consciousness was formed through the interactive experience of not merely "living through" these macro processes, but of resisting them, shaping them, changing the objective reality of these processes through their subjective, human, intervention. Thus armed, social historians lay a justifiable claim to be better able to explain past class struggle, and to thus help contribute to the charting of fruitful strategies for present and future challenges to exploitation and oppression.

Exploring the role of gambling among the Coloured(2) working class in Johannesburg in the early part of this century may seem to be further removed from these concerns and more romantically preoccupied than many recent topics examined by South African social historians. It is important to state the central concerns of the larger research project, which are to help answer questions about the ambivalent nature of Coloured political response to their intensifying oppression before and after 1939, the self-limiting ambiguity of the Coloured political leadership's programmes, and the failure of Coloured political groups, especially on the Rand, to inspire or mobilise their constituencies. The culminating point of the project is an examination of the large-scale rent strike in Johannesburg's Malay Location in 1938-39, which was organised as the first "mass" campaign of Cissy Gool's National Liberation League. I argue that this strike and the events preceding it are exceedingly difficult to understand without a some knowledge of the preoccupations of "ordinary" Coloureds living in these areas, and of the type of culture and community they created.

This paper examines the development and popularity of Fah-fee-fee, a lottery-type game of chance, among the large Coloured population of the Malay Location, a non-racial ghetto about five kilometres from the Johannesburg city centre, and the areas surrounding it, between

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1. E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class Penguin Books 1963, p 12.

2. Following recent academic convention the arbitrary classification "Coloured" is taken to refer to grouping of people often described in other societies as 'mulatto', 'mixed', or 'half-caste'. From the 1890s this name was legislatively imposed on a diverse number of communities, who, for a variety of reasons, came to adopt the term, and to use it in self-description. Many of those so classified reject the term and the classification. Nonetheless the use of parentheses or the prefix "so-called", to indicate objection to the term "Coloured", is avoided in recent academic literature and in this paper.

the two World Wars. The paper suggests that Fah-fee-fee-fee and other games of chance played two central roles in the life of working class Coloureds: it challenged the regime of uniformity, discipline and 'rationally' meted-out reward imposed by the capitalist mode of production; and, secondly, Fah-fee provided an impoverished community with an innovative and pleasurable mechanism of income redistribution and hardship sharing. As such it is suggested that Fah-fee, along with the running of "European" liquor and participation in Congregational Church, which are examined elsewhere, formed the bedrock of the defensive and largely "apolitical" culture which the Coloured working class developed in Johannesburg in the 1920s and 1930s. The Malay Location area became known to residents as "Fietas", a name which captures something of the process of self-perceived community formation. It was in the context of this developing and yet distinctive "Fietas" working class culture, and notion of community engendered in this areas on the basis of this culture, that political organisations had to operate.

THE COLOURED POPULATION OF JOHANNESBURG 1918-1939

From a low base, the number of Coloureds in Johannesburg increased by 188% between 1904 and 1936, and by 86% between 1921 and 1936, to stand at about 20 000 people by the mid 1930s.(3) The Coloured population of Western Johannesburg in the 1920s and 1930s was an especially disparate grouping of people with little by way of common social background, skill levels or world views to bind them into a 'community'.(4) But a community, I argue, did develop from these fragmented and diverse social origins. It would come to be based partly on a common language - 90% of those designated "Coloured" in the Transvaal spoke Afrikaans - and on a group experience of a particular types of discrimination in all spheres of social life.(5) Of more importance, it would develop in certain geographical areas where Coloureds were largely compelled to live. But within this community there were very distinct class cultures, and, in order to

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3. This compares to increases between 1921 and 1936 of 68% for the white population, 66% for the African population and 62% for Indian population. The number of Coloureds in Cape Town increased by 48% in this period. The overall increase in the Coloured urban between 1921 and 1936 was 41% - the highest of any population grouping. See the Report of the Wilcocks Commission p 12. Census figures, especially for the "Coloured" population, must be approached with caution, but as an indicator of a trend towards rapid urbanisation, they have some use.

4. Very little research has been done on Coloured proleterianisation, and very little is known about the motivation, process, gender ratios etc of Coloureds who migrated to the Reef. For a detailed discussion of the available evidence see my papers: "The Coloured community in Johannesburg 1910-1936, with particular reference to the Malay Location and surrounding areas" History Masters group seminar paper, June 1989, and, for the "first wave" of Coloured migration, "The Roots of a community: the creation and development of the Malay Location 1893-1906", History Masters group seminar paper, July 1987.

5. Patterson, S., Colour and Culture in South Africa pp 354/355.

understand the working class culture that developed among the Coloureds of Fietas, a brief, socio-economic 'profile' of Johannesburg's Coloured population in the 1920s and 1930s, and some points about how the conditions they faced changed over time, is necessary.

Coloureds in Johannesburg experienced sustained pressure on wages and work opportunities from the 1910s onwards. Most Coloured men found work in areas where Coloureds had some "traditional" claim, in the sense of having dominated such trades in the Cape. Even by 1936, most of 6 100 "gainfully employed" Coloured men in Johannesburg 1936, worked in either the building trades, or in transport work, or in clothing manufacture, furniture making or wood-work, or in domestic service including hotel work.(6) But much of this work was, by 1936, only nominally connected to the traditions of the independent artisan based professions of the Cape. MacMillan's assertion that Coloureds in South Africa as whole had, by the 1920s, become "a predominantly urban community of low-grade labourers"(7) reflected some of the changing demographic profile of Coloured male employment in Johannesburg's by the late 1920s. By 1936 about one sixth of economically active coloured men told census officials that they worked in jobs which fell under the category "unskilled industrial labourers". The Wilcocks Commission was told in 1933 only 9% of Coloured workers in Johannesburg were skilled, in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act, while about 15% were officially unskilled, and the vast majority of Coloured workers - 74% - were classified as semi-skilled.(8)

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6. According to the 1936 census report, there were 6 726 economically active Coloured men in Johannesburg - a few hundred less than the number of economically active women. "Economically active" was defined as including all people in a particular group over the age of 15 years. Of the 6 726 that were economically active, 6198 were "gainfully occupied". The rest were either retired, unemployed or permanently disabled. Report of the 1936 Census Vol 1 p 110 and Vol vii p xxx. It is impossible to extract from the figures just how many Coloured men were self-employed, and how many were wage labourers of various skill levels. This might have provided important clues to both earnings and attitudes of sections of the Coloured community. Nor is it possible to tell how many of the respondents to the census enumerators were actually working at the time in their stated occupations, or perhaps not working full-time in the listed occupations.

7. Macmillan, W.M., op cit p.

8. Minutes of the Evidence of the Wilcocks Commission; the evidence of the Joint Temporary Committee of Johannesburg Coloured Organisations. p 2122. While some of these figures reflect direct pressure on the skilled artisan based group through deskilling and the rise of machino-facture, much of the explanation can be located at either the influx of relatively unskilled ex-farm workers, or ex-rural cultivators. It is difficult to periodise the apparent decline in Coloured access to skilled work as the depression of 1930 to 1933 affected all the trades in which Coloureds participated, and may have distorted some patterns.

There were two major reasons for this downward pressure on jobs. By the 1920s the white state was playing a central role in ensuring that Coloureds, as a group, had little opportunity of pulling themselves out of poorly paid jobs. By the 1920s much of the 'informal' hardening of racial attitudes and practices in various sectors of the economy became formalised into the "civilised labour" policy of successive white governments. Three restrictive acts were passed between 1922 and 1925 which had a devastating impact on Coloured employment and economic status throughout the country. The Apprenticeship Act of 1922 severely limited Coloured entrance into skilled job categories, the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 justified and codified restrictions on Coloureds' ability to join unions, and the Wage Act of 1925 attempted to set wages rate which had the effect of precluding Coloureds from undercutting white labour. In the Western Cape, Coloured employment levels in every sector plummeted after the passing of these Acts. In the public sector Coloureds had accounted for 44% of all government employees in 1924, but made up only 30% by such employees by 1930. In the same period the proportion of whites in the public sector increased from 44% to 68%.

The numbers of Coloureds working in industrial establishments also dropped rapidly. In the Western Cape, Coloureds comprised 50% of the private manufacturing sector workforce in 1924. But by 1932 they constituted only 43% of this workforce. A combination of deskilling, for example in the furniture trade, and the depression, exacerbated this legislative assault on the basis of Coloured employment even further. Goldin concludes that by the depression, although Coloureds still accounted for 90% of all bricklayers and plasterers in the Cape, "Coloured artisans had been shaken out of virtually all the traditional crafts and prevented by apprenticeship barriers and prejudice from entering the new electrical, machine, and metallurgical crafts."**(9)** This decline in employment was reflected directly in Johannesburg's Coloured community. The Wilcocks Commission was told that by the 1930s "a considerable proportion of the Coloured community has to depend on casual work. A large proportion of them do temporary work, as manual labourers or as semi-skilled workers."**(10)** From official figures it appears that about 10% of Coloured workers in Johannesburg in 1936 were unemployed or at very least, under-employed.**(11)**

As a result of these kinds of pressures it is not surprising that the wages of those Coloureds who did have relatively steady income work remained largely static in the 1920s and 1930s. In the mid-1920s the Economic and Wage Commission reported that the rate of pay for Coloured unskilled workers in towns in South Africa generally

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9. Figures from Patterson, S <u>op cit</u> p 73, Goldin, I, <u>op cit</u> p43, and the comprehensive overview of Coloured employment provided by the Wilcocks Commission Report, p 56-70.

10. Minutes of the Evidence to Wilcocks Commission, p 2107.

11. Report of the 1936 Census Vol 1 p 110 and Vol vii p xxx.

had ranged from three to five shillings per day. Unskilled workers in the building industry had their pay fixed at 27s 6d per 44 hour week by the national council of the building industry, or just over 5 shillings per day. The same commission suggested that Coloureds, and skilled labourers in particular, were under severe pressure all over South Africa: "...the increased cost of living due to the war was not compensated by increases in pay as the presence of the natives helped to keep down wages. The standard of living of the Coloured people then became seriously depressed, until today their condition is parlous."**(12)** By the 1930s the Wilcocks Commission was being told that unskilled Coloured wages averaged about one pound a week, still only about 4 to 5 shillings per day. The rate for skilled labour - less than 10% of the Coloured male population of Johannesburg - was set down at 3/6 per hour, which was almost 10 times the rate for unskilled labour which was set at a paltry 4 pennies an hour. The Joint Temporary Committee of Johannesburg Coloured Organisations argued that this provided only about half the income that Coloureds needed to survive, and they pleaded for a wage of "at least ten shillings a day..".**(13)** A survey of 14 Coloured families living in Pretoria in 1933 found that all but one of the fourteen families examined did not earn even half of the required ten pounds ten shillings per month regarded as "a minimum for a family of two parents and four children to try to live decently." Many families' total formal sector income - even those in the long time employ of the Pretoria municipality - was well under five pounds per month.**(14)**

The last point to note in this very brief outline of the Coloured working-class's socio-economic status was the very small size of its commercial and professional class, particularly in Johannesburg. Only 200 men and women were counted in this census category in Johannesburg in 1936, and this number was made up mostly of teachers. The medical, financial and legal professions had few or no Coloured members in Johannesburg.**(15)** As a result the emerging Coloured community had little "group capital", or even the most rudimentary forms of structured community support. The Indian group, to cite just one comparative minority group in Johannesburg, created communal facilities like special hospital wards, old age homes, free (usually religious) schooling, and even provided a limited number of university bursaries. The small size of the middle class would also

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12. Report of the Economic and Wage Commission (UG 14/1926) p 351. The same commission suggested that rates of pay on farms for Coloured workers varied considerably from 7s/6d. per month in Oudtshoorn, to 3s 6d per day. This excluded "rations and some form of shelter" worth about a further pound per month.

13. Minutes of the Evidence the Wilcocks Commission, verbatim evidence of Joint Temporary Committee of Johannesburg Coloured Organisations, p 2122.

14. p 2793/2794 Evidence to the Wilcocks Commission of Enquiry

15. see "'Becoming a somebody' - Fraternal Lodges and the Coloured Middle Class in Johannesburg 1918-1938", History workshop paper February 1990.

have major implications for the political mobilisation of Coloureds in Johannesburg; few Coloureds had the resources for even part-time political work in the 1920s and 1930s.

The small size of the professional class and the relatively poverty of even the skilled artisan based elite should not imply that there was no class or racial stratification in the developing community in Fietas. The small skilled elite made strenuous efforts to distance itself from their semi-skilled and unskilled fellows, grouping themselves into elitist fraternal lodges and condemning pastimes such as gambling and the new year's carnival, that provided some sense of community for lower class Coloureds. In turn, working class Coloureds often viewed some members of the artisan based middle class class with some disdain, especially their propensity to "pass for white". "Passing for white" was in fact the main avenue of social mobility for the Coloured middle class until well into the 1920s, and this was not unconnected to the small size of this middle class or to the low levels of Coloured group capital, and semi-professional political organisers. On top of this the Fietas area, although marked by relatively harmonious relationships between various statutorily defined racial groups, was nonetheless riven with tensions between Coloured tenants and Indian landlords, Muslim traders who did not socialise with their Muslim Malay fellow residents, Coloured middle class antipathy to both the Indians generally, and to Africans who were increasingly hiring rooms from Indian landlords in the "bottom" end of the location. These tensions are explored elsewhere, but none of them prevented at least some sense of collective belonging from developing in the Malay Location area, which, I argue, became an important factor in later struggles against rent-hikes and removals in this areas.

The Coloured working class was thus caught in an uncomfortable double bind between white workers, who had the weight of state legislation largely on their side, and African labour which was prepared by force of even more severe pressure, to accept low wages. Coloured unemployment or underemployment in Johannesburg was thus relatively high, especially in the depression years, and the small lower middle class was unable to provide either the capital or structures for much community relief or social welfare provision. Other ways had to be found to make up that portion of required income not provided by formal sector employment.

As a result of this growing downward pressure on jobs and wages, most Coloureds had little choice by the 1920s but to mobilise all the family's available labour power in the generation of extra income. The utilisation of family labour power to generated income, as opposed to the direct reproduction of the family unit, was common to many communities especially in the face of an imposed capitalist economy. But the mechanisms by which this labour was extracted, and the interplay of gender oppression and age hierarchies in the allocation of tasks and extraction of surplus, and how these changed in an industrialising and urbanising context, differed widely from group to group. From available evidence, only a very limited picture of Coloured family structure in Johannesburg emerges. The very disparity of the Coloured community makes generalisation about family structure or domestic struggles extremely difficult. Both urban and rural Coloured families were, in the 19th century, strongly partricentral, with male household heads been responsible for income generation. Women were largely responsible for the direct reproduction of the family unit. This basic pattern replicated that of sections of white community, and reflected, in many ways, much of the gender hierarchy of the "European" socialisation which Coloureds had received. It appears that this division of labour was enforced, with similar ideological constructs buttressed by similar punitive and ultimately violent sanctions, as those pertaining to the European settlers in South Africa.(17)

The process of urbanisation industrialisation was widely held, by the 1920s and 1930s, to have had a severe effect on family cohesion, and "traditional" patriarchal family patterns. By the 1930s Coloured community leaders, who were mostly men of lower middle class origin, felt a great concern about the "disintegration" of the family unit within Coloured society. The Wilcocks Commission concluded that while well-off Coloureds were still able to effect an "estimable sense of their parental duty" in their children, and that children

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16. This phrase is taken from the report of the Wilcocks Commission of Enquiry p 19, and in context refers to the widespread feeling of the Coloured (male) delegations from around the country that women were able to play this role only in an distorted and unsatisfactory way through earning income from informal sector activities. This left less time for child rearing, keeping the house tidy and cooking and cleaning for the family.

17. Belinda Bozzoli's discussion of the usefulness of analysing historically specific, socially rooted "patriarchies" (in her article "Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies in The Journal of Southern African Studies, Volume 9, number 2 1983 pp 139-171), remains the most instructive theoretical guideline to unwrapping the complex interplay between domestic struggle and capitalist development in South Africa. This paper does not attempt to do justice to the concepts developed by Bozzoli as evidence about the specific types patriarchal relationships which developed within the Coloured group (if this in fact did occur) is still very thin.

from such homes "show respect and obedience to their parents", the situation among poorer Coloureds had become fragile: "family life is often unstable; there is often no legal marriage and frequent desertions occur. The relations between parents and children are many cases very loose, family discipline is weak, and children show but little attachment to the home or their parents."(18) The commissioners further concluded "against the disintegrating influences threatening the family life of the lower sections, the mother is usually the strongest cohesive force...", and it was mothers who "often put up a pathetically brave fight on behalf of her home and children against adverse conditions."(19).

It is difficult to work out to what extent these comments might have applied directly to Johannesburg's Coloured community, and any periodisation of loosening kinship ties can only be guessed at. For the slightly more affluent lower middle class a Christian inspired family structure - ie a nuclear family revolving around the male head of the household and some weak extended family commitments - appears to have remained an unquestioned ideal. One informant argued: "there was no such thing as illegitimate children in Vrededorp... there were so few in all communities, the whites too, in those days. On the fingers of one hand you could count the illegitimate children. The family was a close knit unit..."(20) But the Wilcocks Commission reports that by the mid 1930s for South Africa as a whole, "30% to 40% of all Coloured births are illegitimate."(21) Although this reflects official definition of illegitimacy, there were clearly tensions developing in the fabric of Coloured family life. By the mid-1930s the Wilcocks Commission reported a Coloured youth delinquency rate nine times that of Europeans, although in absolute numbers this amounted to only about 300 cases per year.(22) For the Coloured community of Johannesburg, there does not appear to be major concern about the "youth" as a social category until the 1940s. In the mid-1940s "Boys' brigades" and the "Girls' brigades" were set up by Coloured churches in Johannesburg in an attempt to "bring children to Christ" and more generally, in the context of a loosening of parental authority and youth unemployment, provide wholesome pastimes for young adults in the Coloured community. But for the moment it appears that family structure was such that parents could draw on their children's labour, and that women

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18. The Report of the Wilcocks Commission p 19.

19. Ibid.

20. Mr. Pieterse, 2nd interview, November 1988.

21. The report of the Wilcocks Commission p 20. This may have been the case only because "legitimate" was strictly defined in terms of marriages before government-appointed marriage officers, and the commissioners did concede that some of the "illegitimate" unions were "sometimes of a permanent nature and marked by a sense of responsibility to the illegitimate children", but the number of unstable parental unions was clearly on the increase as economic conditions deteriorated in the 1920s and 1930s.

22. The Report of the Wilcocks Commission, p 21.

were concerned to contribute their resources into family orientated obligations.

Some aspects of the role of Coloured women in contributing to family income can be deduced from census statistics. In the formal sector the only significant source of employment for Coloured women in Johannesburg in the 1920s and 1930s was in domestic service.

OCCUPATIONS OF COLOURED WOMEN IN JOHANNESBURG IN 1936

Household duties at home	4140
Domestic service	2118
Laundry worker	305
Chef, cook	221
Student	174
Sewing machinist	87
Dressmaker	66
Textile worker and tailoress	48
Teacher	47
Total	7206 **(23)**

Domestic service, which was taken to mean domestic work for gain in the houses of third parties, was thus the main source of formal sector employment in Johannesburg in the 1930s. In 1921 this sector had provided 1 581 Coloured women with employment and was then only significant category listed under Coloured women' employment. In this sector, which can be described as part of the "formal" sector only with caution, Coloured women were under great pressure from African competition. The Joint Temporary Committee of Johannesburg Coloured Organisations estimates that Coloured women's wages in domestic service decreased by at least 33% between 1930 and 1935 because of this competition. **(24)** Mr. Marks, the Acting Town Clerk of Johannesburg's Town council, told the Wilcocks Commission that in domestic service "native competition in Johannesburg is great. This is put down to the fact that taking Natives as a whole, and comparing them with the Coloured people in Johannesburg, the Natives are usually looked upon as being more capable, trustworthy and respectful." **(25)** While domestic work was thus the major source of formal sector employment for Coloured women, it is thus not surprising that 57% - numbering over 4000 - of economically active Coloured women in Johannesburg performed "household duties at home" in 1936. It is clear that the bulk of these duties were not just the "normal" reproductive tasks of women within a patricentral family unit. The vast majority of these women took in washing, or participated in other informal sector activities such as shebeen running (mostly

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23. All figures are from the 1936 Census report, op cit.

24. Minutes of the Evidence of the Wilcocks Commission, verbatim evidence of the Joint Temporary Committee of Johannesburg Coloured organisations p 2152.

25. Ibid. Written evidence of the Johannesburg Municipality to the Wilcocks Commission, 23 July 1935, p 2.

reselling "European"liquor), hawking, cake baking and, in a somewhat different vein, the avid playing of the intriguing "Chinese" game of Fah-fee.

But before Fah-fee and the role women as Fah-fee players - and thus as an important part of developing the collective culture which would form the basis of the Fietas community - can be examined, a few brief points need to be made about the urban environment of the Malay Location and surrounding areas, and the more precise nature of the "household" duties which Coloured women performed to improve family income.

The largest proportion of Johannesburg's Coloured population lived in the Malay Location, or in areas close to it. As there are few reliable population statistics for individual Johannesburg suburbs it is difficult to say anything more specific about how this may have changed over time. By 1932, four geographically close suburbs, Fordsburg, Burghersdorp, Ferreirastown and the Malay Location housed 5 304 members of Johannesburg's Coloured population and 3 820 of the Indian population - some 9 000 people in all, excluding the whites and large numbers of Africans who also lived in these areas. The Malay Location was the only area in which Coloureds and Indians were able to live with some degree of legality in the 1920s and 1930s, and this area thus formed the core of the largest conglomeration of Coloureds in Johannesburg.**(26)** As I have argued elsewhere these areas were characterised by very high rents, and extremely poor living conditions.**(27)** The state provided few facilities for education, housing, or recreation and almost no poor and sick relief, and only limited access to hospitals and other public amenities. In a context of these poor conditions, limited opportunities and increasing political and economic pressure, Coloureds on the Rand had to rely either on their existing support networks, or devise new forms of social support.

The most popular form of informal income enhancement was taking in washing from the white areas of Johannesburg, or from wealthy Indians living alongside Coloureds in the Malay Location area. As early as 1907 the Reverent Charles Phillips of the Congregational Church had described working class Coloured's need to engage all the families' resources in the battle to make ends meet:

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26. For a detailed, suburb by suburb breakdown of Johannesburg's Coloured population see my paper "The Coloured community in Johannesburg 1910-1936, op cit.

27. See "The Malay Location in the Development of urban segregation in Johannesburg 1901-1922", History Masters group seminar paper October 1988.

> "A considerable number (of Coloureds) are labourers - farm and otherwise - and many of them work in the mines. Their wives and daughters wash clothes or go out to service. Every member of the family, from a very early age, does something to earn his livelihood, and they show remarkable versatility in turning from one employment to another. One man, the owner of his own cab and horses, spends more than half his time assisting his wife and mother-in-law at the wash tub, and says that at the present time he can earn more in that way than with his cab. Often they will put in 15 and sometimes 18 hours a day...The average earning is from six pounds to ten pounds a month. This is eked out by the wife's washing and ironing, and by the service of the children. .... "**(28)**

Phillips's estimate of earnings appears to be on the generous side, but the ability to call on family labour is clear from this early extract, and this labour would play a critical role in the ability of Coloureds families to survive in Johannesburg for the next thirty years. It appears to have been the norm throughout this period for white families to either send their clothing to commercial laundries or to employ domestic servants to do it, or to send it out to be washed in the black suburbs.**(29)** Coloureds presumably offered a better deal than could be had at commercial cleaning operations or from African women. Coloured families often had a more secure roof over their heads, as well as access to tap water, and this may have given them advantages over their African counter-parts. African families in the Malay Location do not appear to have attempted to take in washing as Coloured families did, in spite of the Zulu washermen's domination the laundry sector in Johannesburg's early years.

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28. Phillips evidence to the Transvaal Indigency Commission (TG 11-08) p 230-231. It is important to note that Phillips was also trying to convince the Indingency Commission that Coloureds were not a threat to white workers or to white artisans, so his views may have been suitably tailored for this effect.

29. There appears to have been intense competition for the laundry of white Johannesburg, with both Coloured and Chinese laundries existing in large numbers by the First World War, and large numbers of commercial laundries having been set up. Public laundries were also set up by the Johannesburg Town Council just before union. Although I have not examined this area in detail, it can be assumed that by the 1920s and 1930s there were still considerable numbers of commercial laundries operating in Johannesburg, and the popularity of Coloured washing needs to be explained in this context. See Van Onselen, C., "AmaWasha, The Zulu washermen's guild of the Witwatersrand, 1890-1914", in Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886-1914, vol 2 New Nineveh, pp 74-110.

Mrs. Stoffel, who was born in 1900, and who grew up in Vrededorp and lived in the same house in 21st Street for over 20 years, recalls the broad extent of this activity during the 1910s and 1920s:

> "There wasn't a house which didn't have a bundle of washing to do, from the Europeans. I had to go Parktown, or Yeoville, or Orange Grove but it was easy for us because it was our living. Oh my word, I was a great washer and ironer. That's how we grew up: we go to school and when we come from school our lot is there that we got to wash. We would carry it on the head. Walk Walk! Veldskoen gedra! It was easy going, you'd think nothing of running to the zoo ... "wat ma se and wat pa se dit moet net so gedoen word, verstaan jy, not like today where the child is the big one and the mother and father are the small ones."(30)

Laundry work involved long and arduous hours, but for a large number of Coloured families it was the only reliable, legal source of extra income. Mr. Daniel Pieterse, born in 1918, recalls something of washing in Fietas in the late 1920s and early 1930s:

> "many of these Malay and Coloured women earned a living by doing people's washing. There were very few factories. You know in those days Monday was an early and busy day for the children because they - say the mother and one or two of her children - they go out to Johannesburg to collect the people's washing ... One child could manage a small bundle. Monday is collect. Say Tuesday, Wednesday are the days of washing, Thursday and say a bit of Friday morning, some ironing. And then of course some people wanted their washing early - it would be a special request. They'd leave a note, or tell the child 'tell your mother I'd like my washing Wednesday or whatever it is ... On Friday depending on how much washing the person had, they'd hire a cabby - then the washing wasn't squashed..."(31)

Peter Abrahams emphasised the harsh life of his Aunt Margaret, who, along with most of his friends' mothers in Vrededorp in the mid 1930s, took in washing to make ends meet:

> "Walking in the early morning in scanty clothes to Berea to get the washing, and then, before six, dumping down the bundle in the yard, sipping a mug of hot black coffee, then starting on the washing and keeping at it the whole day. We knew about all that, but we were too young to see anything wrong in it. We had known about it intimately all our lives."(32)

Despite the labour intensive and arduous nature of this work, a relatively small cash income was generated from washing. Mr. Pie-

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30. Interview with Mrs. Stoffel, September 1906.

31. Daniel Pieterse, first interview, February 1988.

32. Abrahams P., "Love" a short story in the collection Dark Testimony, (1942), p 22.

terse recalls that families would get only " two and six for a dozen articles. A dozen could include a shirt, a vest, a sheet, a towel, a pillowcase. Now don't forget these people often did washing for miners, or people who were bachelors. They did washing for families too, well, of course, more articles, so they could charged more."(33) But washing was a legal informal sector activity, and, as explored elsewhere, even very poor Coloureds in the Malay Location were often staunch members of a number of Christian Churches, most notably the Ebenezer Congregational Church. The moral opprobrium attached to illegal activities like shebeen running - as well as the threat of arrest - made taking in washing an attractive and socially acceptable means of income generation.

Thus economic and social circumstances forced a great many women to work from their homes in the Malay Location and surrounding areas doing back-breaking, repetitive work for a large portion of their working lives. Some Coloured women who took in washing did participate in other less legal income producing activities such as running bottled 'European' liquor, a few even brewed their own liquor and ran shebeens. Some, especially among Malay Community who abstained from dealings with alcohol, baked cakes and 'koeksusters' to sell to neighbours.(34) These women all shared a reasonably similar life-style, and, despite their heterogeneous backgrounds, were, through daily contact with each other, and through sharing local news and talking about their common hardships, able to see each other as fellow-travellers. This self-identification was enhanced by a number of other shared activities and recreational outlets, especially the playing of Fah-fee, which would become closely identified with the Fietas 'way of life'.

"EK HET SO GEDROOM"; FAH-FEE AND THE BASIS OF COMMUNITY IN THE FIETAS AREAS BETWEEN THE WARS

Fah-fee appears to have come to South Africa with the Chinese trading population, a large number of whom moved to Johannesburg between 1902 and 1910.(35) Fah-fee was a "numbers" game similar to those which were popular in many large cities in the USA.(36) According to

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33. Mr. Pieterse, 1st interview, February 1988.

34. I deal with these activities, especially the running of "European" liquor in some depth elsewhere in my dissertation, and in a paper presented to the History Master group seminar in June 1989 entitled "The Coloured community in Johannesburg 1918-1936, with particular reference to the Malay Location and surrounding areas", from which this paper is largely drawn.

35. See Van Onselen, C., op cit, p 97. Unfortunately I have not been able to gather much information about the origins and development of the these.

36. See Bloch, HA., "The sociology of gambling" in The American Journal of Sociology 57 (1957); Drake, S., and Cayton, H., "'Policy': Poor Man's Roulette", in Herman, R., (Ed) Gambling (Harper and Row 1967) and Rubner, A., The Economics of Gambling (London Macmillan 1966).

one of the commissioners on the Wilcocks Commission, Mr. De Villiers, it was also similar to "the old British army game 'House-House'."(37) An important 1952 Drum article described Fah-fee as "essentially Chinese in character, ... successfully introduced into the country about fifty years ago."(38)

Fah-fee was very simple game, similar in basic principal to ordinary lotteries, and any numbers-based game of chance such as roulette. In theory players had to stake money on a number between one and thirty-six. If their chosen number corresponded to a number randomly chosen by the Chinese game organiser, they would win 36 times their original stake. In practice a number of extra features made this basic game more complex: the winning numbers from the last two draws were not allowed to be played in the current round, reducing the numbers to be chosen from to 34; players could bet on as many numbers as they like; there was a special number, similar to the zero or double zero in roulette, called "dou-di" which paid out a much higher stake when drawn; and finally the actual payout on winning bets was between 24:1 and 26:1, as the "runners", who collected bets and distributed winnings, earned a "commission" out of the original 34-1 winning payout.

Besides reasonably good odds, Fah-fee was surrounded by an elaborate network of procedures and customs. The first and most accessible point to make about Fah-fee as a mechanism of redistribution is that it gave an income to a large number of runners. These runners were the basis the game's organisation, and they made Fah-fee as convenient as possible to play. Major Mitchell of the SAP told the Feetham Commission: "Fah-fee is a gambling game in great vogue among the Chinese. They send out runners to sell numbered tickets. Sometimes the ticket bears a number, sometimes it bears the name of an animal. The runners go back with the money and a short report as to the numbers of tickets sold. Then the winning ticket is drawn from a box, the same way as a lottery. The buyer of the ticket never goes near the principal. When the prizes are drawn the runner is given the money, and he goes back to the buyer and pays out the prize."(39) The organisation of runners appears to have assumed a high degree of complexity. A Cape Times article in 1949 suggests, "the man collecting the money is not always the one to hand it over to the banker. Very often, the ordinary runner is a sub-agent merely collecting the wagers and passing them on to a chief runner, a trusted and tried man who will not give away his principals if caught."(40) An interviewee recalls something of the hierarchy and organisation of the runners: "How these runners did it puzzled me , because they always came to your house: "do you want to play Fah-fee today", and then

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37. Minutes of the Evidence to the Wilcocks Commission p. 2814.

38. Drum, September 1952 "Fah Fee - Secrets of the 'House of numbers'", by 'Skappie'.

39. Minutes of the Evidence to the Feetham Commission, verbatim evidence of Major Mitchell, reported in the Feetham Report p128.

40. Cape Times Magazine November 19 1949.

you tell what your dream was or whatever, whatever signs you got, you paid and then they took it away. One day my mother said, 'we're just too late - go there after the runner and give it in.' He took it, put it into his money bag, he gave it the head runner."**(41)**

Runners in Johannesburg - and it appears in Cape Town as well - were almost exclusively Coloured men who could apparently earn a "cushy living" working for the Chinese.**(42)** Most runners got something like a basic retainer from Chinese game organiser, as well as a hefty commission of between 24% and 30% of winnings (about eight pennies on a thirty four penny win). Over and above this it appears that most runners also got "tips" from satisfied winners, or that some simply tipped themselves, "vreeting" [scrounging] off the 'top' of each winning bet.**(43)** On top of this income, many runners also had a regular flutter on the Fah-fee numbers themselves. Mr. Pieterse outlined the mechanics of this system: "to encourage the runners, the banker would offer the runner a commission on the amount he brings in. Then of course the bankers themselves bet out of their commission. Now sometimes if he bets the right number his commission will bring quite a few pounds."**(44)** Another source suggests that runners often ran their own "book", taking bets on main game privately: "it often happens that the runner, himself and expert in the game, will, if he considers that bets have been placed on impossible numbers, run a private "book" on his own account. If the number does not turn up, he is the richer by the amount wagered. If it does he has to pay out to those who wagered on the number. Needless to say, he is more often the gainer than the loser."**(45)** "Running" was thus a major way in which Fah-fee recirculated the limited incomes of Fietas residents to other members of the community.

It is impossible to quantify how many Coloured men took up the option of "running" for the Chinese game-master as source of or supplement to their incomes. Mr. Pieterse, a lucid informant, gives some hints: "Yes, yes, [there were large numbers of runners] - well the number of runners was restricted, they were a bit jealous too. They didn't want too many to muscle in on their thing you know. But players, well just about anybody would play."**(46)** Mrs. Stoffel, who grew up in Vrededorp and lived there for many years, recalls that the runners were "Idlers, no work or nothing. This is how they also got their start: they come round, you just want to play your tickey and I say my father wants to play sixpence, it goes with the money.

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41. Mr. Walter Paul, interviewed February 1989.

42. All interview and written sources are clear that runners were largely male, and almost exclusively Coloured. The opinion that runners could earn reasonable amounts was expressed by most informants, and this phrase is from the Drum article, op cit.

43. Drum op cit.

44. Mr. Pieterse, first interview, February 1988.

45. Cape Times Magazine, 19 November 1949.

46. Mr. Pieterse, first interview, February 1988.

The runners lived in the same place [as us], they had no jobs, that is all they could do to make a living... [There were] lots and lots of runners. All working for the Chinese, they can't get no other work. Anything to make a living. What are they going to do - you must eat, you must live under a roof."(47) Another informant recalls: "The runners were making a living from it. Some of them were either pensioned off, or too old to work, but there were young guys as well. Some of older ones sometimes said if they felt too ill, they sent their sons or daughters. They made a living. I think if I had been a runner I would have been much better off today."(48)

Besides providing a livelihood to a reasonable number of Coloured men, Fah-fee was also perceived by the players as a means of supplementing meagre incomes. The suggestion that Fah-fee <u>as a game</u> acted as mechanism of redistributing income within an impoverished community, may well be contentious, and, possibly, over-imaginative. But the combined evidence of how Fah-fee appears to have been perceived, and an analysis of just how much of the money staked was actually returned to people within the same community, suggests that Fah-fee was in fact an elaborate revolving accumulation mechanism, not too far distant from other forms of communal assistance popular with working class Coloureds such as the stokvel, the Credit and Christmas clubs. Fah-fee's redistributive function even compares in some ways with the social welfare functions of the fraternal lodges of the more well-to-do Coloureds in this same area.

Two women living in Fietas in the 1920s and 1930s recall:

> "She [my mother] did it [Fah-fee] because it helped us in the house with food and so on, because we grew up without our father ... it used to help. What ever she wins ... she gives it to my auntie ... Poor people used to live on it. There were a lot of poor people in Vrededorp. Some of them weren't educated. If they dreamed of something, they make a number out of it. The Africans used to play a lot, because they were also very poor."(49)

Fah-fee was played twice a day, with draws usually taking place at around 11am and again at about 3pm. This gave players the opportunity of very regular participation in Fah-fee. Mr. Walter Paul recalls:

> "My mother played rather regularly, because there was no money, some days she only had tuppence or so, and then she stakes a penny and she sometimes got 2/6 back. Sometimes she said she had a dream, something about bees, she places a number, she put tuppence on it, then she got three shillings. She never was able to afford six pence on a number, but there were many other people who could. [You had] a very

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47. Mrs. Stoffel, interviewed in September 1986.

48. Mr. Walter Paul second interview January 1990.

49. Mrs. Hutton and Mrs. McCullough, interviewed together in July 1986.

> good chance [of getting a return] because there are 36 numbers. Out of the 36, two can't come and there was one number - if you staked on that you got three times the money what ever you paid. Money! They would try and get some more somewhere and these Chinese offered them that opportunity."**(50)**

Mr. Pieterse commented that "ordinary players.... played to win. They don't play for amusement...".**(51)** Mrs. Stoffel recalled: "You played your tickey - it was fun - and it was making money. God, wouldn't you try your luck when you know you are going to play a tickey and get six bob back? You won't stand back! We were so broke."**(52)** Mrs. Ephrahim, a Malay woman, who lived in Vrededorp recalled: "Fah-fee was very strong then... you haven't got food now, you take a tickey or a sixpence, you like a number - I may win a few shillings and put on a pot of food."**(53)** In their submission to the Wilcocks Commission of the Joint Temporary Committee of Johannesburg Coloured Organisations, made of leading middle class elements in the Coloured community conceded, in their usual defensive tone, that gambling played some role in the economics of poor households:

> "Gambling is indulged in but is not unduly prevalent, not to such an extent that families are neglected or the rents are not paid. It is pursued more as a means of obtaining excitement, other means being largely lacking. Another factor of importance is that gambling is indulged in as a desperate method of supplementing or replacing means of livelihood which are inadequate."**(54)**

Similar points have been made about working class gambling in Britain, and especially about horse-racing and the pools. These games differed very significantly from Fah-fee in terms of a culture of skillful consideration that developed around them. Horse racing and the football-pools became 'intellectual' outlets for the working class and random, uninformed betting was frowned upon. But the need to supplement family income was, at least for women, as important a concern as the recreational aspect of the game. McKibbin, in a comprehensive article on working class gambling in Britain between 1880 and 1939 quotes a Lady Bell telling the Royal commission on gambling in 1932: "the systematic betting of the women... is in many cases at first a quite deliberate effort... to add to the income. A man comes to the door of a woman who, either from her own thriftlessness, or from stern necessity, is hard pressed for money and

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50. Mr. Walter Paul, interviewed in February 1989.

51. Mr. Pieterse, first interview, February 1988.

52. Mrs. Stoffel, interviewed September 1986.

53. Mrs. Ephrahim, long-time resident of the Malay Location, interviewed March 1986.

54. Minutes of the evidence of the Wilcocks Commission, verbatim evidence of Joint Temporary Committee of Johannesburg Coloured organisations p 2143.

presents her with the possibility of spending a shilling and winning five pounds. How should she not listen to him?"**(55)** McKibbin links this kind of discretionary gambling to other ways in which the working class financed its consumption expenditure, including the widespread use of hire purchase, and a consequent never-ending cycle of debt and credit. This is very similar to the consumption patterns of the Coloured working class in Johannesburg in the same period who had credit arrangements with their landlords, as well as with most local shops, and hire-purchase and "lay-bye" arrangements with many "European" and Indian clothing and furniture stores.

That "poor people lived off Fah-fee" is made more plausible by small stakes allowed. Unlike Pukka-Pew, an elaborate Bingo-like game run by the same Chinese Fah-fee organisers, which required a minimum stake of sixpence, the smallest bet allowed in Fah-fee was a penny. This would return at least 2/6 if the bet was successful. This pay-out was more than sufficient, as nearly all informants felt compelled to stress, for a large family meal or two. As such you could play Fah-fee 26 times, a penny a time, before you began running a deficit. Fah-fee was one of those rare games were the odds of winning was directly reflected in the returns on winning bets. This would appear to be counter-intuitive at first glance, but a brief statistical scenario shows that a very high percentage of the staked money returned, collectively, to bettors as winnings, or to runners as commission. Assuming that 100 people played the same game, that they all staked a penny, and that the numbers 1-34 were evenly divided among them, then there would, in an ideal game, be three winners out of these assumed 100 players every time there was a draw. Each of the winners would get the pre-set return of 34 to 1 minus the runner's commission, thus 24 to 1. In this prefect model game, the Chinese banker would actually lose 2 pennies (having to pay out three wins of 34 pennies each).

In this way it was similar to the basic the American game of 'Policy', which was compulsively popular in the black ghettos of Chicago and other US cities, and which also relied on dream interpretation. Players had to choose a number, or series of numbers, from between 1 and 76. Twelve numbers were then drawn and if the chosen number was among them, then basic return was 10:1 on the original stake. The odds of winning this small amount were about 6:1. Small scale players could make a small return relatively often, as in Fah-fee. But, unlike Fah-fee, in which big money was only possible if a large stake was played, the most popular bet in 'Policy' was a "gig" - a bet on three sequenced numbers which paid out a massive 400:1. But the odds of predicting three of the 12 chosen numbers in sequence was 76 076 to 1.**(56)**

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55. McKibbin, R, "Working Class gambling in Britain 1880-1939", in Past and Present, 82, February 1979, p 163. I am grateful to Philip Bonner for pointing this article out to me.

56. Drake, S., and Cayton, H., "'Policy': Poor Man's Roulette", in Herman, R., (Ed) Gambling (Harper and Row 1967) pp 3-10.

Of course in practice Fah-fee did not return anything like 100% of the stake money to the collective fraternity of bettors. The size of bets differed widely, and the distribution of numbers, even in a fairly large sample of players, would not be evenly distributed. The amount accruing to the "house" on average would be in the regime of 10%, a 'guesstimate' based on often single figure returns of over games. The Chinese "bankers" relied on a very high turnover through two draws a day, and they also relied on game for only a sideline income. Almost all the "bankers" appear to have been storekeepers in the Fietas areas. Even when the bank was "broken", either because of a large number of winning bets had been placed, or because a single large stake had been wagered on a winning number, there appears to have been no problem in continuing the game. The five or six Chinese who ran the Fietas banks were, according to one informant, seen as benefactors. Mr. Walter Paul remembers: "There were quite a few Chinese running Fah-fee. My mother tried different ones, the runners would come and say this one said I'm representing Musi, I'm representing James, because these Chinese had names. They really felt the Chinese was helping them, they just said, oh, its my bad luck, I should have put my money on that number, not on this."(57) It thus appears fair to suggest that Fah-fee played some role, amongst other networks of mutual assistance, in recirculating the limited income of residents of the Malay Location and surrounding areas.

But the economics of Fah-fee, and its relatively egalitarian redistributive function, and the way in which it provided income for its runners, were not the only reasons for the pervasive popularity of the game in the Western Johannesburg ghettos. One particular analysis of gambling argues: "because of gambling's quasi-instrumental, economic character, it is also peculiarly suitable for working out the conflicts engendered by the discipline, frustrations, and constraints of the capitalist economic system. Since its rewards are distributed on the basis of chance, gambling would appear to make a mockery of the legitimate economy, with its stress on rationality, discipline and hard work and its assumed correlation of effort, merit, and reward."(58) The white middle class's concern with gambling - a perennial issues between 1905 and the 1950s - made much the same case. The Witwatersrand Church council complained to the 1909 Transvaal gambling commission "the foundations of all honest and steady industry were being sapped by the fostering of the passion to get money without working," and the debate over the Roodepoort Town Council's decision to hold a lottery gave rise to debates on issues like "Bolshevism in Lotteries".(59) It is very

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57. Interview with Mr. Walter Paul, January 1990.

58. Devereux, EC., Entry on Gambling for the Encyclopaedia of Social Science pp 53-61.

59. see The Leader 19/3/1909, and The Stars 24/8/1923. Conflicts over white working class gambling, and to a certain extent, gambling by Coloureds and Africans, were the subjects of a number of commissions and many outraged statements from industrialists and religious bodies over the first half of this century. Dog racing, introduced in the 1930s and which became wildly popular among white and co-

difficult to "apply" this kind of analysis to Fah-fee and to ascribe this kind of motivation to the Fah-fee players in Fietas. But, from a number of different angles it does appear that an element of Fah-fee's popularity can be found at least in the fact that it was, in some ways, a challenge to the whole overarching system of controls that any section of the black working class faced.

Some support to this contention is given by the way in which the winning numbers were announced. An elaborate set of visual codes were developed to convey the winning number around the ghettos and to avoid detection from the South African Police. Mr. Paul recalls: "The Chinese draw the number called "Fowl", and they came along and just showed that,(a motion of a finger being drawn across the throat, suggesting the slaughter of a fowl) and then everybody knew. They said that [that method of sign language] was just to put the C.I.D.s off the track, the signals. They sometimes used to catch these Chinese and the runners and then they just paid a fine and came out again."**(60)** Drum reports: "The result is made known to the public ... amazingly quickly. It is passed on from corner to corner by signs, eg, and arm being whirled denotes No.11 Carriage, a slight stoop denotes No 21 - the elephant, the right hand pointed to the sky, the moon (number 9) etc."**(61)** The Cape Times commented: "the relentless enemies of the runners and the bankers and, to a lesser extent, the players, are the police with whom the exponents of the illegal art of playing Fah-fee are waging continual under-ground warfare, pitting wit against wit, and somehow just keeping outside of the long reach of the law...".**(62)** Through the signalling method people often got to hear of the winning number long before their runner actually got to them with their earnings. Mrs. Stoffel recalls: "how we used to go and look for the bloody runners if they didn't come - if we heard the Chinamen pulled that number and you did play that number - where is the runner now? It's murder!**(63)** There was thus an ever-present sense of collective conspiracy involved in playing Fah-fee, and this appears to have added enormously to its appeal.

Another possible avenue which might give credence to the suggestion that Fah-fee was an avenue "for the working out of conflicts engendered by the discipline, frustrations, and constraints of the capi-

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loured working class men, was outlawed in 1949, after a fiery 15-year dispute and at least one commission of enquiry. The fascinating history of working class gambling in South Africa remains to be written.

60. Interview with Mr. Walter Paul, February 1989.

61. Drum op cit. The Cape Times Magazine comments: "the result is known throught the town in a few minutes. The basis of this is the 'bush telegraph' somewhat similar to the tic-tac principle of the British race course...".

62. Cape Times Magazine, op cit.

63. Interview with Mrs. Stoffel, born 1900, interviewed in September 1986.

talist economic system" without stretching the point to functionalist extremes, can be based on studies which suggest that 'non-skilled' games of chance such as Fah-fee were, and are, played much more heavily by women and other "low-status" economic groups. A 1960s Swedish study suggests further it was not just groups of "low-status" but those which lack of avenues of social advancement, who were particularly prone to play such games of chance. **(64)** These points are important because those who played Fah-fee were, overwhelmingly, the large numbers of Coloured women who were officially categorised as "performing household duties" in the Malay Location and nearby areas. Although men occasionally played, they were often in reasonably regular employment during the day, and participated in other forms of essentially weekend gambling such as dog and horse racing. **(65)** Of the approximately 2000 women who were living and working in the Fietas areas in 1932, a large proportion might well have found in Fah-fee an enhancement of hope, a possible way of thinking beyond the narrow confines of hardship.

Much more research is needed before this line of argument can be taken further. It does appears likely at this stage that the emphasis on mysticism and dream interpretation, which were an integral part Fah-fee playing, were also deeply connected to the limited horizons which real life often imposed on the residents of Fietas. Fah-fee offered a translation from the relatively empowering world of dreams to a prospect of improving, if only temporarily, the reality of powerlessness that most players found themselves in. One well-developed psychological view sees gambling games as "expressive models" onto which "a variety of psychological conflicts and problems can be harmlessly projected". **(66)** But, as other writers show, gambling games are not "free and spontaneous expressive activities of individuals but are embedded in culture". Roberts and Sutton-Smith show, according to Devereux, "games have special relevance for the psychological problems that are endemic and widespread in the cultures or subgroups in which the played." **(67)** In this way petty gambling may be unintentionally functional to keeping "the system" going: "it may serve to revitalise certain relevant patterns of motivations that are given little scope in routine economic pursuits ... and may function as an institutionalised "solution" for many specific psychological problems generated by the conflicts, strains and ambivalences embedded in the economic system." **(68)**

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64. This is cited by Devereux, Ibid, p 57.

65. More work needs to be done on these areas, and while figures are available for the amounts of money spent on various forms of gambling at various times, it is not possible to disaggregate these figures along ethnic or racial lines.

66. Devereux, E.C., op cit p54.

67. Ibid p 56.

68. Ibid. p 59.

Although it is probably dangerous to read too much into the symbolism given to the numbers in Fah-fee, or to make to much of its "revitalising" effects, each number did have corresponding symbols, and dream interpretation was the main way in which numbers where chosen. These are the numbers and their respective association as pieced together from informants and from a rather irreverent Drum report in 1952:

1. King - dream of a white man
2. Monkey - dream of someone with a dark skin
3. Sea Water
4. Dead Man - back this if there has been a death in the family
5. Tiger - dream of a quarrel
6. Ox - dream of blood or bloodshed
7. Chico - dream of a **skelm**(rascal)
8. Pig - dream of food, stomach or Chinamen.
9. Moon - dream of a round object.
10. Egg
11. Carriage
12. Dead Woman
13. Big fish or young man
14. Old woman
15. Bad woman
16. Pigeons - dream of aeroplanes)
17. Young woman (or Diamond woman)
18. Silver Money - dream of small change
19. Little girl
20. Cat (or paper money)
21. Elephant (or old man)
22. Horse (or ship - or dream of boots or shoes)
23. Chutta or month (dream of long hair)
24. Big House
25. Ship
26. Bees (or Angels)
27. Dog - a dream of a policeman
28. Herring (small fish)
29. Changlee - dream of crying or any kind of water
30. Fowl (or Minister or Imam)
31. Fire - or dream of hell
32. Gold Money - a favourite Rand Miners
33. Little Boy
34. Flowers
35. Keptan: a Chinese reference to female genitals
36. Nonquai: male genitals **(69)**

Mr. Pieterse recalls: "They bet on their dreams, they bet on hunches, somebody walked past a fire and they saw a fire, so he's fired with the idea he must come and back fire at the Fah-fee. You see, maybe it comes off, then it's worth it."**(70)** Mr. Paul, who recalled he learned the numbers at "eight or nine years of age, everyone knew it" was "surprised that it all came back after sixty years". He went on to recall how his mother would dutifully recall her dreams every day for both the morning and afternoon Fah-fee games, despite their oppressive poverty:

> "She just told me this, let me recall a dream, she often put it on three numbers. For Diamond ladies you would perhaps dream of a queen or a beauty queen or a princess, or someone who was regarded as extremely high - then you would take diamond lady. If it was a low class women you would say its

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69. Drum op cit.

70. Mr Pieterse first interview, February 1988.

number 15, the bad one.(71)

Mrs. Stoffel, an avid Fah-fee player recalled:

> "I used to play too - you got six bob for a tickey, you play a number and of course you go according to your dreams - what ever you want to dream, or what you fancy, if a cat jumps on you - put a tickey on the cat. They had special runners. Your dream, you tell them. The runners come to your door, or you go hunt them. You had such a wonderful dream, so you go hunt them, [you say to them], 'Ek het so gedroom, ek gaan die nommer speel, kat of tiger, of Elephant of so iets.' People used to just go in for this Fah-fee, you dream a funny dream, you going to try that number."(72)

It may be a fruitful exercise to attempt to link the dream interpretation of Fah-fee to the local superstitions, popular myths, and religious beliefs of the Coloured community, and to trace how those are in turn linked to their social experience of proletarianisation and urbanisation. But this daunting task cannot be attempted without a good deal of further research and without drawing on the skills of a number of different disciplines.

Fah-fee was thus a complex social phenomenon. It offered pockets of hope in a context of daily desperation, it linked the unconscious world of dreams to an impact in the real world, and, as I have argued, it provided a risky but fairly regular source of extra income for many families. It also provided employment for an unspecified number of runners, or possibly part-time or temporary employment for the unemployed or the under-employed. But most importantly Fah-fee was one the main anchor points of whatever the Coloured working class culture in "Fietas" became. Fah-fee provided people with a shared experience, an "in" game which only those who shared the common space of these black ghettos could know really well. This was particularly the case for the Fietas area, and an understanding of this helps to situate and in part explain some of the macro-political processes and struggles in this area, which are examined elsewhere. Mr. Paul recalls: "Fah-fee - I grew up with it - it was Vrededorp that. You know, they also played in Kliptown but it was not as popular as in Vrededorp. Vrededorp was the place - that was the dorp of Vrede (peace) - for Fah-fee work."(73)

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71. Interview with Mr. Walter Paul 23/1/1990.

72. Interview with Mrs. Stoffel, September 1986

73. Interview with Mr. Walter Paul, January 1990.