THE VICTORIA STREET INDIAN MARKET
1910-1973

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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by

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FOREWORD

In any undertaking of this nature, the author, usually, has a source of motivation. In this instance, my inspiration was derived from my grandfather who for the majority of his life, sold fruit and vegetable in his Victoria Street Indian Market stall. It did not make him a rich man; but it provided him with an income to feed and clothe his children. He could claim that he did not owe any person a single cent. He was over seventy years of age when he died in 1970. One could say he was spared the agony of seeing a way of life go up in smoke.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor J.B. Brain for spending time and effort in familiarizing me with the source material that was available in the Natal Archives in Pietermaritzburg. This was beyond the call of duty.

Special mention has to be of the assistance of the staffs of the Daily News Library, the Don Africana Library and University of Durban-Westville Documentation Centre.

To all my friends (who are too many to mention), it was highly appreciated that you cared and showed an interest by reading extracts from my thesis and providing support when I was in doubt. To Alim,
Anusha, Mahen, Shamilla and Vicki, thank you for making research fun.
I am indebted to my friend, Robin for all his assistance.

The typing of this thesis was graciously done by Mrs K. Perumal.
DULL WOULD HE BE OF SOUL WHO COULD PASS BY
(A SIGN IN THE INDIAN MARKET)
INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND TO INDIAN TRADE IN DURBAN

In 1860, it was decided to indent labourers from India. Between 1860 and 1911, a total of 152,184 indentured Indians emigrated to Natal. At the end of each five year period of indenture, many Indians were able to exceed the supply. Some sought a change of employment and offered their services as artisans, domestic servants, tailors and laundymen. Others found employment in the railways, dockyards, coal mines and in the civil service. Others turned to fishing and gained a monopoly of this industry. Indians also leased or bought land for themselves and became suppliers of fruit and vegetables. Some went into commerce and opened shops.

There was hardly a part of the economy of Natal that was not dependent on Indian labour. Brain (1985) states that the Natal Government Railways employed 8000 Indian indentured labourers. Some of the positions, these men occupied were pointsmen, overseers of labour gangs, signalmen and refreshment car attendants. In 1910, many were transferred to the South African Railways on maintainence and other duties. In the civil service, Indians served as interpreters at the various magistrate's courts and the Supreme Court, where they used their linguistic abilities in four or five languages. They also worked as postmen, compounders and sometimes as postmasters. In the urban areas, they worked as policemen, clerks and in various positions in the Durban and Pietermaritzburg Corporations.
The Indians employed in the manufacturing and industrial sector, made a comfortable living as artisans and semi-skilled workers. By the 1870s, Indians were engaged in the fishing industry. There were about 187 fishermen, in 1886, who worked during the fishing season between June and December. They owned twelve nets and fourteen boats, catching some thirty tons of fish. The Indian fishermen supplied fresh fish to Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

Those Indians who turned to agriculture, especially market gardening, found suitable land in areas around Durban such as Springfield, Riverside, Sea Cow Lake and Jacobs. The soil was good and crops grew in abundance, for example ground-nuts, beans, potatoes, tomatoes, carrots, brinjal, green and red peppers, tobacco, coffee, just to name a few. Mangoes, jackfruit, custard apples and bananas were in plentiful supply. In a short time, the green fingers of the Indian farmer had transformed the land, "as if a magician had waved his wand and produced a patchwork of quilt of many colours." By the mid-1880, Indians were the largest group of market gardeners in the Durban area. Some 2000 Indians, by 1885, occupied land within two miles of Durban, free from rates, taxes and the by-laws of Durban, yet with a large market at hand for their produce. By 1904, nearly 7000 Indians were believed to be engaged as independent producers of fruit and vegetable crops. Between 1896 and 1909, the extent of land reaped by Indian farmers rose from 11,722 acres
(4 743.73 hectares) to 42 000 acres (16 996.8 hectares). In 1909, out of Durban's total population of 60 144, there were 15 047 Indians. Hence "from an early hour in the morning, Indian hawkers, male and female, adults and children, go busily with heavy baskets on their heads from house to house and the citizens can daily, at their own doors and at low rates, purchase wholesome vegetables and fruits, which they could not with certainty procure in public markets and at exorbitant prices." This competition by Indians cut into the livelihood of the white colonists who once controlled this profitable trade.

Thus anti-Indian feelings amongst the majority of whites in Natal became evident, as early as 1871, when the Mayor of Durban in his Minute Reports complained about the building of 'coolie dwelling houses' in the towns. Three years later, he mentioned "the further erection and habitation of coolie shops in our midst, with their belongings of dirt and other objectionable things which can be seen at present at the West End and other parts of town." In 1875, he felt that "legislation will doubtless have to be resorted to, to prevent these people thus locating themselves in our very midst..." In that same year, there were 37 stores owned by Indians. However, by 1885, there were 66 Indian-owned stores. Twenty of these were in West Street. Therefore the Superintendent of the Borough Police in his report on the increasing number of Indian retail stores in Durban, in 1889, recommended no licences be
given to Indians for any building in the three main streets of the town.\textsuperscript{14}

However any person who wanted to open a business could do so on payment of a stamp duty. The licensing authority viz. the magistrate, had virtually no discretion to refuse an application for a trade licence. The ease with which licences could be obtained led to complaints that overtrading and excessive competition existed. As a result of relentless agitation, the Dealer's (Wholesale and Retail) Act 18 of 1897 was passed. The Durban Town Council gained full authority over the conduct of trade and occupation used for trade in the town. The Licensing Officer was given power, at his discretion, to refuse licences to applicants. The licences could be refused, on the grounds that the applicant's premises were insanitary or the applicant could not comply with conditions of the Insolvency Law as regards the keeping of proper records. Unsuccessful applicants had the right to appeal only to the Town Council.\textsuperscript{15}

By 1903, the number of Indian commercial establishments in the Borough of Durban increased to 321, comprising of 210 retail shops, 80 wholesale stores, 20 lodging and eating houses and 11 butcher shops.\textsuperscript{16} In addition, two hundred hawkers' licences were issued to Indians. In the same year, the Mayor is on record as saying:
'There have been very marked increases in the number of licences held by Asiatics and we now find that in the main streets of the Borough, large blocks of valuable property are held by Asiatics, that they are daily acquiring other properties and that many new buildings are being erected for trade purposes by Asiatics, which under existing laws will in all probability be licenced because such laws will not permit of applications for licences being arbitrarily refused... I consider it would be an advantage to Indians if their business premises and habitations were congregated in a special area.'

The Mayor urged that steps be taken to introduce legislation for the registration of Asiatics in Durban and the laying out of bazaars or locations. But in Durban by 1905, ninety-two out of a total of 318 wholesale businesses were run by Indians. Furthermore 200 of the 950 retail stores belonged to Indians and almost all of the 145 eating houses belonged to Indians. Thus Act 18 of 1897 did not seem to have restricted the development of Indian trade.

However during the period 1897 to 1907, Act 18 of 1897 was used to reduce the number of Indian traders and remove them from prime trading sights in West Street, in particular. According to Rajah (1968), the discretionary licensing powers possessed by the Durban Town Council played a significant part in confining Indian businesses to the
northern extension of the central business area with Grey Street as its axis. The West Street area, together with the Grey Street area comprised the central business area of Durban. The West Street area, some 530 acres in extent, was bounded by Cemetery Lane, Cathedral Road, Pine Street, Albert Street, Alice Street, Old Fort Road, Prince Alfred Street, the Victoria Embankment and the railway line. On the other hand, the Grey Street area was, in extent sixty acres, bounded by Albert Street, Pine Street, Cathedral Road, Cemetery Lane and the railway line. By 1910, this half of the central city area became firmly established as an Indian business district.20

After the First World War, the extension of Indian businesses was hampered by restrictions on the granting of trading licences. In 1920, the Asiatic Inquiry Commission, headed by Sir John Langer, recommended that Indian trading be located in separate areas in towns. By the 1940s, there was strong opposition from White residents in Durban to what was known as 'Indian penetration' into White areas. In 1943, the Second Indian Penetration Commission reported that the rate of penetration had increased since 30 September 1940. Some three hundred and twenty-six sites had been acquired by Indians from Whites, while only sixteen sites had been acquired by Whites from Indians. This was as a result of the restriction on trade that Indians had more money for investment and preferred to invest in land. White agitation led the Government to pass the Trading and Occupation of Land (Transvaal and Natal) Restriction Act
1. Central Area of Durban
2. Indian-owned land within the Central Area
3. Railway and Harbour Land
4. Zone of Public and semi-public land uses
5. (1) Central Railway Station
   (2) Greyville Race Course
   (3) Non-White City Bus Termini
   (4) Indian Squatters' Market
   (5) White Retail and Wholesale Markets
   (6) Industrial Areas
   (7) Resort Region
   (8) Indian Market

(SOURCE: D.S. RAJAH: THE DURBAN CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT, p.73)
of 1943, which was referred to as the 'Pegging Act'. This Act froze property transactions in Durban by prohibiting changes in ownerships or occupation between Whites and Indians except with the approval of the Minister of Interior. The Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act followed in 1946. This Act incorporated the general restrictions of the 'Pegging Act', except in specially exempted areas, where Indians were free to buy or occupy land. In 1950, the National Party Government passed the Group Areas Act which empowered the government to restrict inter-racial changes of ownership and occupation of property throughout the country and to decide where members of the different racial groups should live. The Government also had the power to rearrange areas of residence, ownership and trade. 21

In the late 1950s, the Indian central business district was the only one in Durban that had not been declared a group area for any racial group. It was a 'controlled area.' Ownership and development of property in the Indian central business district was regulated in terms of the Group Areas Act 77 of 1957. Since ownership and occupation in the area was predominantly Indian, property owned by Indians could be transferred to other Indians, without any permit from the Minister concerned. Similarly property which was occupied by Indians may be occupied by other Indians without a permit. But where there was to be a change of racial character in ownership or occupation, a permit from the Minister was necessary before such exchange could be made. With respect to the development of
property, new buildings on vacant land or those built in replacement of existing structure required a permit from the Minister before they could be occupied by any racial group. The permits were issued on condition that all forms of residential occupation was strictly prohibited and that shops be let to displaced Indians who occupied such premises in a White group area. A further condition was that the Minister could withdraw the permit at any time. This had a dramatic impact on the development of the Indian central business district which included the Victoria Street Indian Market.22
FOOTNOTES

   Blue Books of the Colony of Natal, 1880-1911.


3. J.B. Brain: 'Indentured and Free Indians in the Economy of
   Colonial Natal' in B. Guest and J.J. Sellers (eds):
   Enterprise and Exploitation in a Victorian Colony,
   pp. 221-226.

4. S. Bhana: 'Indian Trade and Trader in Colonial Natal' in B. Guest
   and J.M. Sellers (eds): Enterprise and Exploitation in a
   Victorian Colony, p.238.


6. C. Ballard and G. Lenta: 'The Complex Nature of Agriculture in
   Colonial Natal: 1860-1909' in B. Guest and J.M.
   Sellers (eds): Enterprise and Exploitation in a
   Victorian Colony, p.141.

7. J.B. Brain, op.cit., p.211.

8. Indian Opinion (Durban), January 22, 1910.


10. Mayor's Minutes, Durban, 1871.

11. Mayor's Minutes, Durban, 1874.
12. Mayor's Minutes, Durban, 1875.


15. In 1906, appeal to the Magistrate's Court was allowed.


17. Ibid.


22. Ibid., pp. 265-266.
CHAPTER I

FORMALIZING OF TRADE: THE ORIGINAL INDIAN MARKET

From 1876 onwards, Indian market gardeners, that is fruit and vegetable sellers converged behind the present Post Office in Gardiner Street to offer baskets of fresh produce for sale. In 1900, the scene of activity shifted to the courtyard of the present Jumma Musjid (Grey Street Mosque). The fees generated by the Mosque Market in Grey Street, which by 1909, were calculated at £1460 to £1500 a year. But the desire to accommodate more traders and the desire to attract more customers, coupled with the fact that the site was needed for building development, precipitated a move. On 1 August 1910, at the western end of Victoria Street, the Indian market was opened. Latrines were erected at a cost of £200, while fencing cost £80 and drainage for £45. The first Indian Market Superintendent, W. MacDonald was paid a salary of £25 a month. His assistant, Suchitt Maharaj was paid £8 a month.

The market gardeners were allowed to ply their trade in the open street every day from Monday to Saturday between the hours of 4.00 am and 10.00 am. The Town Council prohibited traffic in Victoria Street, bounded by Grey Street and the railway line near Brook Street. At the end of each day's trading, Victoria Street resembled a vegetable patch. The streets were strewn with leaves and rotting vegetables. The town's
own team of horse drawn water carts cleared up the mess for traffic to roll along each afternoon.  

In one corner of the Indian Market, at the rear approach to Queen Street where the African Beer Hall once stood, the fish and meat stalls were located. Live poultry was available along with the fish and meat. Fish and meat had to be delivered daily to ensure that the supply was always fresh. There was an abundant supply of everything at phenomenally low prices. A whole leg of mutton weighing eight to ten pounds cost the consumer 2 shillings (s) and 6 pence (d). Fish sold for a few pence. The fourteen stallholders at the fish section, in 1957, handled between 40 000 to 50 000 fish a week. This was bought from wholesalers at a cost of between £2000 and £2500. On 21 March of that same year, the stallholders started a boycott of fish wholesalers. They demanded reductions in the wholesale price of certain fish. There was a glut of 'slingers' and 'reds'. The wholesalers rather than reducing their prices put large quantities of fish in cold. As a result of the glut, some fish were sold at a loss. The stallholders 'demanded that the wholesale price of 'slingers' be reduced from one shilling (s) to 9 pence (d) a pound and the price of 'reds' from 8d to 7d a pound. However the stallholders decided to obtain most of their fish supplies from a Cape Town firm. This resulted in a slump in prices at the Indian Market. Table 2 illustrates the low prices of fish at the Indian Market in comparison to the Borough Market.
2. MAP OF DURBAN

(SOURCE: HOLODOMEN'S STREET MAP OF DURBAN, 1971)
## FISH PRICES AT THE INDIAN AND BOROUGH MARKETS

<table>
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<th>INDIAN MARKET</th>
<th>BOROUGH MARKET</th>
<th>DIFFERENCE IN PRICE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kingklip</td>
<td>2 s a pound</td>
<td>2 s 4d - 2 s 9d</td>
<td>4d - 9d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sole</td>
<td>2 s 6d</td>
<td>3 s 2d</td>
<td>6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salmon</td>
<td>1 s 4d</td>
<td>1 s 6d - 1 s 8d</td>
<td>2d - 4d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockfish</td>
<td>8d</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bream</td>
<td>10d</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roe</td>
<td>11d</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 1:** A comparison of fish prices at the Indian and Borough Market for April 1957.

By 1967, fifteen tons of offal were sold every week and eighty percent of the mutton from the Durban Abbatoir was sold at the Indian Market.

The Victoria Street Indian Market had nearly three hundred stalls selling a variety of merchandise ranging from foodstuffs to curios. There were nearly two hundred food stalls, catering for practically all the culinary needs of the Indian population. There were good things to eat such as ladoos, samosas, dhall and rice and a variety of sweetmeats. There was a large number of grocery shops and tearooms. The tearooms sold items like cool drinks, bread, biscuits, milk, confectionary, cigarettes and tobacco. The grocery shops drew customers from all parts of Durban. A typical grocery stall stocked a variety of foodstuffs ranging from tinned and packaged foods to fresh produce. Spices in jars were displayed on shelves. Other items like rice, lentils, sugar,
3. CURRY POWDER STALL IN THE INDIAN MARKET

(SOURCE: FIAT LUX, DECEMBER 1973, p.25)

4. FISH STALLS

(SOURCE: FIAT LUX, DECEMBER 1973, p.24)
flour, mealie-meal and dried beans were stored in 'bins' or sacks which lined the counter. The ends of the sacks were rolled down as the contents diminished in quantity.  

Since there is nothing so rich, so aromatic, so tasty as a real Indian curry, the Indian Market was renown for its curry powders. The masala 'king' dealt with a number of different kinds and mixtures of curry powders. Pyramids of brightly tinted curry powders were set in enamel basins on the curry merchant's counter. His advert caption was: 'IF YOU ARE SATISFIED, LET OTHERS KNOW! IF YOU AREN'T SATISFIED, LET NAIDOO KNOW - 84 INDIAN MARKET.' Lovers of curry could have mixed curry powders with flamboyant titles such as 'Mother-in-Law Exterminator', 'Real Hell Fire', 'Atomic' or for the more conservative palette just good old plain, 'Mild'.  

According to Campbell-Tacit (1964) once you enter the Indian Market:

"...you thrill to a stronger excitement reminiscent of the atmosphere of the pulsating bazaars on the island of Zanzibar. All your senses are assailed at once with the clamour, the odours and the kaleidoscope of crowded stalls and milling humanity. Overhead, the tangle of criss-cross wooden beams filmed with cobwebs under the corrugated iron roof are hung with a bewildering assortment of baskets, bird cages, cane chairs, calabashes, coconuts and whatever articles cannot be accommodated"
on the stalls while bare electric bulbs shed their light on the scene below. As you shoulder your way among the black, white, brown and yellow folk, you suffer jostling and buffeting you would never tolerate in West Street. While your ears accustom themselves to the thrum of voices and chirping of plumed birds in their wire prisons, your nostrils cope with the nuxed fragrance of spices, flowers—and ripening fruit."

Part of the fun of visiting the market was the intense bargaining that goes on before an article is purchased. No respectable trader expected to get paid exactly what he asks the first time. He would have felt cheated. Likewise a tourist would not have felt he had made a bargain if he did not haggle with the 'poor' stallholder. It worked, both ways, however. The trader added a few extra cents to his wares and 'reluctantly comed down to his real price.' Both buyer and seller were happy because 'buying something here is an event, not just a prosaic transaction in a shop.'

A visit to the Indian Market was high on the list of priorities for the majority of visitors to Durban. R.J. Naran, a curio-dealer and jeweller claimed:
5. A CURIO STALL

(SOURCE: DAILY NEWS, DURBAN, OCTOBER 4, 1962)
"Without a doubt the Indian Market is a drawcard for the tourists to Durban. Many distinguished visitors to the market have expressed their opinion that we have the finest market in the world. I should know for I meet people from many countries at my stall."

He had two notebooks for autographs of prominent people from overseas who bought souvenirs at his stall. These included W.J. Brimblecombe, a Member of Parliament from Canberra (Australia). Also members of the 1965 All Blacks rugby team, the French table tennis team, Australian rugby team, the football teams of Tottenham Hotspurs, Durban United and Glasgow Rangers, who all made purchases at R.J. Naran's stall.

The atmosphere in the Indian Market is best described by this extract from the Sunday Tribune (14 May 1971):

"In cracked glass showcases, held together by sticky-tape, cunningly-carved mandarins made of plastic and ivory, nod side by side. Overhead, basketwork and leather goods nudge your head and persuade you to look up. Coloured vases, brass, copper and pewter wares gleam. Perspiring tourists, laden with cameras, haggle for a better deal; but the food stalls are brightest. Apples were never so red, grapes so tempting. Rows of multi-coloured curry powders draw the regulars for their
favourite blend. In the meat section, whole insiders of sheep hang from hooks. Among the traders are white-haired men with calm eyes who saw the market's birth.  

Although the Indian Market was opened on weekdays, Saturday was the busiest day when some 60,000 people visited the market. The nearness of the Indian Bus Rank in Victoria Street and the Berea Road railway station to the Indian Market made shopping there convenient.
6. THE VICTORIA STREET BUS RANK

(SOURCE: CITY ENGINEER'S DEPARTMENT - A TRAFFIC PLAN FOR DURRAN, p.62)
FOOTNOTES

1. The Market Survey, City Engineer's Department, 1983.

2. Indian Opinion, Durban, July 2, 1910.

3. Ibid., July 30, 1910.


5. Ibid., p.25.


7. Ibid., April 14, 1957.


10. B. Campbell-Tacit: The Durban Story, p.204.


14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.
CHAPTER II

2. THE INDIAN MARKET AND THE DURBAN CITY COUNCIL

The Durban City Council's total annual revenue from the Indian Market was approximately £11 500 per annum, for the first 25 years of the market's existence. The City Council incurred no great expenses other than administrative and special departmental services such as police and sanitary control. The 'Squatters' Market, which was held in Victoria Street between 1910 and 1934, was as lucrative to the Durban City Council as the Indian market. The fees collected from farmers and squatters averaged £3 300 per annum out of the total annual revenue of the Indian market. However the number of market gardeners who sold their produce on the pavements along Victoria Street increased steadily. The market gardeners brought their produce to the market, early in the evening, sometimes as early as 8.00 pm. This was partly because of the perishable nature of fresh produce and partly due to the considerable distances involved in getting to the market. Many of the market gardeners slept on the pavements until dawn. This scene was repeated six days a week. Hence the City Council proposed the removal of the Victoria Street 'squatters' market' to an enclosure abutting on Warwick Avenue, a swamp area. In 1931, £15 000 were provided for the City Engineer to proceed with work. The area had to be drained before building commenced. In 1934, the 'Squatters' Market' in Warwick Avenue was established under the control of the Market Department. But
Greyling (1976) suggests that 'continuous quarrels' amongst Hindu and Islamic market gardeners, which arose from strong religious and caste differences necessitated the separation of the two religious groups. Therefore the 'Squatters' Market' in Warwick Avenue was built to accommodate Hindu market gardeners in 1934. However this superficial interpretation ignores the financial boost in rents that the City Council accrued. The rentals collected from the 618 stalls in the Warwick Avenue market was twice the £3 300 collected at Victoria Street 'Squatters' Market in the early 1930s.

The Indian Market was considered a fire hazard by the Chief Officer of the Fire Department, H. Kenchenten after he had inspected the market in April 1957. Kenchenten reported that:

"The state of congestion, overstocking, bad storing, the lack of elementary measures of hazards, together with the combustible nature of at least half of the building and its contents, the mass of humanity and the congested area surrounding the property make the mark market one of the worst fire hazards in the city."

He suggested, as an emergency measure, no cooking and fires be allowed inside the market. He called for an investigation of the electrical wiring system. Kenchenten wanted the number of stalls reduced and the stock of stallholders be limited while all unnecessary combustible material be cleaned out. The passage-way between the stall had to be
7. **INDIAN MARKET - 1929.** THE MARKET GARDENERS BROUGHT THEIR FRESH PRODUCE AND SQUATTED ON THE STREET, TEMPORARILY CLOSED TO TRAFFIC; HENCE "SQUATTERS MARKET."

*(SOURCE: F. MEER: PORTRAIT OF INDIAN SOUTH AFRICANS, p.98)*
widened. The Medical Officer of Health, Dr. C.R. McKenzie endorsed Kenchenten's observations. He warned that conditions in the Indian Market were 'ideal for food poisoning and food sold there did not conform to modern hygienic standards. Flies, rats, inadequate washing facilities all presented ideal conditions for the spread of food poisoning.'

Also in 1957, the Indian Market was threatened with destruction, in order to make way for the proposed Western freeway. The traffic survey by the City Engineer found that most of the traffic bound westwards found its way via West Street and Berea Road or via Grey Street, Alice Street and Old Dutch Road. Both these routes carried considerable volumes of traffic bound for other areas. The congestion that occurred clearly indicated the need for some relief at this point. The natural outlet was the continuation of the Pine Street-Commercial Road combination through the West Street Cemetery, to cross the railway line near the then Victoria Street bridge; pass through the then existing Testing Grounds and finally to merge into Old Dutch Road and so give a direct connection to the National Route. Three possible methods were suggested for effecting this desired connection. The illustration, 'Traffic Plan for Durban - 1957', gives a schematic representation. Scheme 'A' was depicted the best and most economical route for the new road. It provided a perfect right angled approach to the important Grey Street interaction and necessitated the minimum interference with
8. CENTRAL CITY ROAD STRUCTURE
COMPLETE SCHEME

(SOURCE: CITY ENGINEER'S DEPARTMENT: A TRAFFIC PLAN FOR DURBAN, p.52)
existing buildings; but it passed through the middle of the West Street Cemetery. This required the reinternment of the remains in several hundred graves. Scheme 'B' illustrated the only practicable route which entirely avoided the cemetery. But it gave a less satisfactory intersection with Grey Street and introduced an additional bend. Larger and more modern buildings had to be demolished. Scheme 'C' represented a compromise. The satisfactory approach to Grey Street was retained while interference with the cemetery was reduced to a minimum though not completely eliminated. Acquisition included the Roman Catholic Church. Some reburials were necessary; but land for these could be made available by a slight northward expansion of a part of the cemetery.  

What this meant was that the Indian market would be demolished. Under the scheme chosen, 'A', 2 1890 square feet of the market was needed for the 'inner ring' road and 12 000 square feet for a road linking Cemetery Lane and Victoria Street. The demolition of the Indian Market could have been avoided if the freeway had been risen on stilts, which had been done elsewhere in South Africa.  

However in June 1957, Mervyn Gild, chairman of the City Council's Trading Undertakings Committee said:
"Provision will be made in the 1959-60 estimates to move the present Indian market to a new and modern building on the old Testing Ground site. Although road expansion will chop off a section of the Municipal Testing Grounds in Alice Street, the remaining area plus Market Road and the site of the Engineer's workshops will be included in the proposed plans for a new Indian market."7

By the early 1960s, limited work had been done. By June 1964, Durban was still without a major free flowing traffic route to the interior.

In 1964, there were complaints of alleged cruelty to livestock and poultry. In April of that year, a special report, on the condition and treatment of livestock and poultry at the Indian Market, by M.A. Churchill, Municipal Director of Market stated:

"The City Council has authorized the setting aside of three stalls for the sale of pets and seven stalls for the sale of live and dressed poultry... These stalls were regularly examined by the SPCA - at least twice a week and occasionally by an official of the Natal Parks, Game and Fish Presentation Board. Cases of overcrowding or cruelty are also reported to the SPCA by the Market Supervisor. However it is difficult in terms of existing regulations to obtain
a conviction for cruelty to animals and birds, for years the Association has urged the Provincial Administration to introduce regulations to control the number of birds in cages of specified dimensions. 8

The report added that pens provided for live poultry at the market were permanently and clearly labelled with the number of birds permitted to be kept in each. This enabled strict supervision by Market staff ensuring that stallholders did not overcrowd pens.

Health hazards regarding the Indian Market were raised once again in November 1965. A special Indian Market sub-committee, which had investigated the position at the market, came to the conclusion that 43 of the 270 stalls, all of which sold food stuffs, were a definite hazard to health. Thus the City Council's Trading Undertakings Committee recommended that these stalls be closed by 31 March 1966. The stalls were mainly on the outer perimeter of the market. 9 On 13 December 1965, the City Council decided, by 19 votes to 5 votes, to shut the 43 stalls. 10 The City Council agreed to try to provide alternative accommodation for the displaced traders. A sub-committee headed by the Mayor of Durban, Dr Vernon Shearer, was appointed to look into the possibility of providing alternative accommodation for the displaced traders. The other members who comprised the committee
9. TRAFFIC PLAN FOR DURBAN - 1957

(SOURCE: CITY ENGINEER’S DEPARTMENT: A TRAFFIC PLAN FOR DURBAN, p.50)
were Councillors S.J. Smith, L.E. Jenkins (Mrs), Dr E.W.P. Cluver and W. Meduin. It was also agreed that the remaining 227 stalls would be allowed to remain until 31 December 1967 on condition that stallholders carried out improvements to the satisfaction of the Medical Officer of Health, Dr C.R. Mckenize.11 The City Council sub-committee was not able to offer relief to the 43 stallholders. However on 16 February 1966, the Mayor held a meeting with the municipal officials and representatives of the stallholders in the Mayor's Parlour where it was agreed by all parties that the renewal of licences for all, but 9 of the stalls on the perimeter of the market would be granted provided the stallholders agreed to abide by the by-laws controlling kiosks. This meant that all foodstuffs had to be 'pre-wrapped'.12

The City Council did not stop there, in its actions against the Indian Market stallholders. On 20 February 1968, it passed a recommendation of the Finance Committee that tenancies of tradings at the Indian Market would not be transferred to deceased estates or to the heirs of deceased stallholders. The heirs were allowed seven days to wind up business and dispose of stocks. The Deputy Mayor, D.W. Watterson, at the time, pointed out:

"If they were members of the White group, we would not do this to them, but because they are non-whites, we are inclined to forget their rights as they are not voters."13
However Councillor Rauol Goldman refuted Watterson's claim. He said:

"If it was a 'White market', it would have been closed down three years ago; but because we are dealing with non-whites we have been exceptionally understanding and co-operative so as to cause little hardship as possible." 14

Nevertheless many stallholders fell victim to this new regulation. One such example was Shaik Hassan whose father had died on 11 November 1968:

"The day after my father died; I was called to the office of the caretaker of the market and asked to sign a declaration confirming that my father had died. On the same afternoon, we were served with a notice from the Market Master to vacate our premises. The City Council does not seem to show any sympathy to our predicament." 15

The stallholders, however, were not powerless. In April 1968, executor-nominates, of two stallholders who died, refused to vacate the stalls. Notice to vacate the stalls was served on the executors under the Council's policy of refusing to allow stalls to be operated by next-of-kin or estates after the death of the licencees. Legal advisers held that the Town Clerk could eject only a registered stallholder, not his executor. 16
The City Council resorted to other measures, in order to reduce the number of stallholders and ultimately remove them from the Indian Market. The rent for the stalls were regularly increased. For instance a notice for increases in rent at the Indian Market was promulgated in the Provincial Gazette of 29 July 1971. This increase became effective in August 1971. One victim of this increase was W.S. (Bobby) Singh, the owner of Singh’s Cash Butchery which was established in 1910, who had to close one of his three stalls on 31 May 1972. He could not pay the increase in rent from R300 to R500. In the butchery, he sold mutton only. This was not a paying proposition as a result of the sacrity of mutton and the high prices customers had to pay. Mutton prices reached a new high on 29 May of 99 cents a kilogram. Bobby Singh had to lay off more than thirty workers, some near retirement age. Among the workers were S.A. Maharaj who worked in the stall for 24 years, Frank Perumal, 20 years service and Mahabeer Misra, 20 years service, as well.

### STALL RENTALS IN THE INDIAN MARKET: 1945-1971

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Table 2: Rentals paid by stallholders in the Indian Market between 1945 and 1971
The above table indicates that between 1966 and 1971, there were three increases i.e. in the space of five years. By 1971, the rent to be paid for a butchery stall had leaped 66% from that of 1969. While the fresh produce stall rent had been increased approximately 200%. Rent for a poultry stall rose by 50% during this same period. General merchandise which includes groceries, caged birds, flowers, sweatmeat and some fresh produce stalls had rents increased by approximately 75%. The increase in rent by this percentage was not justified in that salaries nor the prices of goods had risen by a similar margin. Before the 1971 rent increase, the City Council derived an income of more than R6000 a month in rent from stallholders (±R96 000 per annum) and about R3000 a month in electricity charges and telephone accounts (±R36 000 per annum). The 1971 rent increase brought in additional revenue of R75 720 per annum. The Indian Market was definitely a milch cow for the Durban City Council. 20
FOOTNOTES

1. Report of the Borough Market Master, 1930. Durban attained city status in 1935. The terms 'City Council' and 'City Engineer' are used in order to facilitate continuity and uniformity.

2. J.J.C. Greyling: The Squatters' Market, p.3.


4. Ibid.

5. A Traffic Plan for Durban, City Engineer's Department, 1957, p.49.


10. Ibid., December 14, 1965.


14. Ibid.


18. **Ibid.**, June 1, 1972.

19. The rent for the years before 1953 and 1971 were converted from pounds, shillings and pence to rands and cents at the exchange rate of £1 = R2.

CHAPTER III

3. INDIAN REACTION TO THE DURBAN CITY COUNCIL'S ATTEMPTS TO CLOSE THE INDIAN MARKET

If previously, the Durban City Council's actions regarding the Indian Market had not been clear, from 1967 onwards, it was evident that Council intended to evict the stallholders and demolish the Indian Market. In response the Durban Indian Market Stallholders' Association sent a letter, in September 1967, to the Market Master asking for a reprieve:

"...in view of the fact that there seems little likelihood of work on the Western Freeway being proceeded with for some years to come, the stallholders make an earnest appeal to you to withdraw the notices and allow them to carry on their legitimate business undisturbed..."

Also a stallholders deputation petitioned the Mayor, Mrs Margaret Maytom before a City Council meeting on 27 November. Ashwin Choudree, a member of the stallholders deputation, was allowed to address the Council. Choudree pointed out that the closure of the market threatened 269 stallholders with ruin as well as deprive 1076 employees of their livelihood. This would have repercussions on the livelihood of ten thousand other. Many of the stallholders had operated businesses in the Indian Market for most of their working lives. B. Mangaldus, who had started at the market in 1935, knew no other trade. On the
other hand, V.M. Govender was faced with the possibility of closing the vegetable and grocery stall which his father had started when the market opened in 1910. Another long term stallholder, the 'Curry King', A. Banoo, had been in business since 1930. Bhana Bhika, also faced ruin if he was moved out of the Indian Market. He ran a curio stall since 1932. Most of the Indian stallholders, if they were moved from the Indian Market had no hope of finding employment elsewhere. Hence Ashwin Choudree proposed to the City Council, that new premises be erected in the vicinity of Indian Market by a consortium of Indian stallholders. This suggestion was accepted. The City Council also agreed to spending R50 000 on renovating the market and to allow it to remain until the area was needed for the Western Freeway. Then a new market would be built, nearby. The 269 stallholders were to be given priority for premises in the new market. However this plan to provide a new market was subject to the approval of the Group Areas Board and the Central Durban Planning Advisory Committee. At the same Council meeting, the recommendation by the Trading Undertakings Committee to allow the stallholders in the Indian Market to continue trading; but subject to strict supervision until 31 December 1968 was approved.

In reaction to the Council's decision to find alternative accommodation for the soon-to-be displaced stallholders, the City Engineer, C.G. Hands said that Council had no legal obligation to do so. This was true, but there was a strong moral case to see that the stallholders were properly
housed. The Councillors had a special responsibility when making decisions which affected the lives and happiness of the voiceless ones, namely the unrepresented non-white ratepayers who had no say in the management of the city. It was unjust to evict the stallholders without providing adequate alternative accommodation. This would have led to unemployment, poverty and hardship for employees and their families.

These sentiments were also expressed by P.R. Pather, a member of the Durban City Council's Indian Advisory Committee, who said:

"Nothing could be cruel and sinister in design than to plan the eviction of some 250 stallholders who have been tenants of the Durban City Council for more than fifty years... if the City Engineer is wedded to the idea that the market must go, then I am afraid, the fate of the Indian people in central Durban is sealed."

Pather's assumptions reflected the notion that there was a plot to destroy Indian trading in the central business district of Durban.

Neither was this notion dispelled by the recommendations of a special departmental sub-committee, which consisted of ten senior officials, under the chairmanship of the Town Clerk, E.R. Irvine in February 1971. The committee insisted that there was no land available in the Victoria Street area for a new market. Chatsworth was offered as an alternative site to accommodate evicted stallholders. The Chatsworth site was to
be leased to any Indian consortium who wished to build a market there. The City Council's Trading Undertakings Committee also reported that:

"...displaced traders in foodstuffs should endeavour to establish themselves in what is considered their proper environment, that is the township centre of Chatsworth."

However the 'proper environment' for the Indian Market was not Chatsworth. The Indian Market was not only one of the tourist attractions of Durban; but also provided an essential service for the community. Thousands of people shopped there daily for vegetables, fruit, meat, spices, ornaments, jewellery and curios. A large proportion of the customers were Whites, without whom most of the stallholders could not survive. Thus Indians wanted nothing to do with trade dealings in Chatsworth.

The Durban Indian Market Stallholders' Association indicated to the Durban City Council in a memorandum that:

"The suggestion that the market move to Chatsworth is abound and most inadvisable. The market must be centrally situated as it is used by citizens from all districts and moreover by all races including tourists from all parts of the world who regularly visit Durban. A market which is not central and which is situated in Chatsworth will not and cannot meet the needs of people who are expected to patronise it."
The memorandum was discussed at a joint meeting of the City Council's Finance, Planning and Trading Undertakings Committees on 19 February 1971. Whereupon the majority, in the Committees, voted in favour of rebuilding the market in the central city area. The councillors decided that the land adjacent to the Indian Market, on which were situated the African ('Native') Market and the Durban Home for Men, would be used to rebuild the Indian Market. It was felt that since the African Market was situated in a predominantly Indian area, that it should be removed. This meant that African traders were to be displaced to accommodate other displaced Indian traders. However two wrongs do not make a right. The Durban Home for Men, on the other hand, was a European institution. It was in an advanced state of disrepair. Repairs would have cost about R10 000. Moreover, the institution which accommodated 155 men, had only fifty men occupying it at the time. 12

However this proposal was fraught with difficulties in the form of the Group Areas Act of 1950 which gave the government the power to restrict inter-racial change of ownership and occupation of property throughout South Africa. The government had the power to decide the areas of residence, ownership and trade for the different racial groups. In terms of the Group Areas Act which was amended in 1957, the Indian central business district in Durban was a 'controlled area', that is it had not been proclaimed as a group area for any racial group. Hence ownership and development of property was regulated by the Group
Areas Act. The Indian Market, the African ('Native') Market and the Durban Home for Men, all were within the 'controlled area'. This meant that, property owned by Indians in the area would be transferred to other Indians without any permit from the Minister concerned, namely the Minister of Planning. On the other hand, where there was to be a inter-racial change in ownership or occupation, a permit from the Minister was necessary before such a change could be made. Since the site of the proposed new market, namely the African Market and Durban Home for Men was owned by the Durban City Council, the decision by the Council to allow an Indian consortium to build the market was thus subject to the approval of the Minister of Planning.

In October 1971, the Minister of Planning, J.J. Loots ruled that if a new Indian market was to be built in Victoria Street, then the Durban City Council itself had to build and retain ownership of it. This meant that new buildings on vacant land or those built in replacement of existing buildings, such as the Victoria Street Indian Market, required a permit from the Minister of Planning before it could be occupied by any racial group. Such a permit for Indian stallholders to occupy a new market would only have been granted once the building was ready for occupation. Furthermore the Indian stallholders who occupied the premises could only do so until the permit allowing Indian occupancy was withdrawn at the Minister's discretion. In response, the City Council
declined to rebuild the Indian Market, on the grounds that it was prevented from doing so in terms of Local Government Ordinance No. 21 of 1942. This ordinance stated that the Victoria Street Indian Market was not strictly a market; but a shopping complex.\textsuperscript{15} According to the Town Clerk, E.R. Irvine, the definition of 'market' as contained in Local Government Ordinance No. 21 was that market meant a place, establishment or undertaking where agricultural produce, game, poultry or any other thing such as usually sold in the municipal markets were offered for sale.\textsuperscript{16} The City Council declared it was not the responsibility of the ratepayers to subsidize commercial undertakings by putting up shopping complexes. The City Council claimed it was not obliged to rebuild the Indian Market; but private enterprise could do so.\textsuperscript{17}

The Minister of Planning, J.J. Loot's decision, to turn down the plan of the City Council to allow a consortium of Indian stallholders to rebuild the market on an alternative site in Victoria Street, could well have been influenced by the South African Indian Council's (S.A.I.C.) attitude. The S.A.I.C. was against the plan because it felt that the task of building a new market was too big for the stallholders since many were always in arrears with their rents. According to A.M. Rajab, chairman of the executive committee of the SAIC, the City Council was running the market at a loss of R51 000 per annum. Therefore the chances of a consortium of stallholders breaking even were low.\textsuperscript{18}
Commenting on the Minister of Planning, J.J. Loot's rejection of the City Council's plans, Rajab said:

"The Minister rightly turned this down because they placed a value of R1.2 million on the site and expected an annual return of 9.5 percent plus rates of R42 000 a year. This plus the cost of building a new market on borrowed money have made the venture uneconomical."19

The SAIC insisted that the City Council, not the consortium, build and finance the new market. Whereupon the Durban Indian Market Stallholders' Association, which was previously opposed to the SAIC's involvement in the matter, decided to ask the SAIC to take up the matter on behalf of the stallholders because the City Council was avoiding its responsibility in providing the community with an amenity such as the market. Thus at a meeting organized by the Durban Indian Market Stallholders' Association at the Vedic Hall on 22 May 1972, two hundred stallholders passed a resolution that stated that:

"...the best interests of the stallholders would be served by co-operating fully with the SAIC in its attempts to establish a new market in Victoria Street. The officials and members of the Association, therefore give their mandate to the Indian Council to work for the achievement of this objective."20
Addressing the meeting, Rajab said:

"Now we can work together and in complete harmony to find a sensible solution to this problem. Since the City Council has shown scant sympathy to your problems, the only hope is to solicit the support of the government."

He, further added:

"I am sure if White people were placed in our position, the Council would try to find other means of building the freeway without unconveniencing Whites. It is because we do not enjoy the right to vote that we are being treated in this manner."

Almost immediately, Rajab, in a letter, dated 7 June 1972, to the Town Clerk of Durban asked for a meeting between the City Council and the SAIC to discuss the future of the Indian market and to resolve two points at issue. The first was the legal obstacles mentioned by the City Council in Local Government Ordinance No. 21 of 1942 defining a municipal market and its functions. The second was providing suitable accommodation for the displaced as a result of the City Council's action in building the Western Freeway. Also in August 1972, a three-man deputation from the SAIC, led by the chairman of its executive committee, A.M. Rajab, met with the City Council's Trading Undertakings Committee. The deputation suggested the displaced Indian Market
stallholders use the Warwick Avenue Bulk Sales Market. The advantage of this was that there was no need to build new accommodation for the stallholders. However the chairman of the Trading Undertakings Committee, P.E. Crayan said that the South African Railways Department was to take a large portion of the Warwick Avenue market for the building of new railway tracks and also for addition to the Berea Road railway station. The remainder was needed for parking vehicles, serving the nearby 'Squatters' Market. Rajab admitted that the City Council was not entitled to establish a market on the lines of the Indian Market. He suggested the Council apply for extended powers from the Provincial Council as it had done in other undertakings, such as the brewing of 'Bantu' beer.

2. Ibid., December 1, 1967.


8. Ibid.


15. Ibid., April 13, 1972.


21. Ibid.


CHAPTER IV

4. THE MARKET FIRE AND ITS AFTERMATH

In June 1972, the Durban City Council extended the amount of notice to be given to the Indian Market stallholders from one month to three months. It also agreed not to serve notice on the stallholders before the end of 1972. This meant that the stallholders could not be evicted before 31 March 1973. But Fate dealt with the stallholders a cruel blow.

On the evening of Friday, 16th March 1973, an African watchman in the building between Cemetery Lane and Queen Street ran in the street, shouting, 'Fire'. At 8.45 pm, Sergeant Latiff Hassan of the South African Police reported that the Indian Market was on fire. The blaze spread through the building packed with merchandise ready for Saturday's trading. The flames could be seen from the beachfront, the Berea, Yellowwood Park and some areas twenty kilometres away. It was the biggest fire in the city since the Cato Creek blaze. Two fire engines were sent from Durban Central Fire Station. Soon after, six more arrived from the Durban North, Congella and Mobeni Fire Stations to fight the blaze. Thirty-five firemen battled to put out the flames. The City Police and the South African Police struggled to keep the crowd, estimated at more than ten thousand, back as iron roofs and the walls crashed down into the street, scattering sparks over the
bystanders. The police asked the army for aid. Men from the Natal Command Citizens' Force rushed to the scene to help with crowd control and fire fighting. About 9.45 pm, the roof of the building collapsed. Simultaneously supplies of fireworks exploded. A special hydraulic lift was used in Victoria Street. This enabled firemen to spray water from a height on to the blaze. About 11.00 pm, at the eastern end of the building, firemen pulled down the iron gates to get at the centre of the blaze. The walls in Queen Street started buckling. There was concern that the market walls would collapse on the crowd. Hence dogs were used to prevent people coming closer. The fire was brought under control. Fifteen firemen stayed on duty all night to damp down the smouldering material while police stood guard to prevent looting.³

Two-thirds of the stalls between Cemetery Lane and Queen Street were completely destroyed by the fire. Only the meat, poultry and fish sections were not damaged. The adjoining Naran Building was also swept by the fire, leaving three families homeless. All the curio and provision stalls were destroyed with millions of rands of trinkets, curios and rare antiques. Many birds and small animals were burnt to death in the raging flames. Friday was the worst possible day for the fire because Saturday was the traders busiest day. The stalls were stacked to capacity to cope with the expected rush.⁴
By 6.00 am, the following day, Saturday, 17th March, hundreds of people had turned up at the Indian Market with baskets to do their weekend shopping. Instead they stood, gaping at the smouldered shell of the Indian Market. By 12.30 pm, the fire had been extinguished. Rubble was strewn across roads leading to the Indian Market. Police sealed the roads leading to the market. On the same day, American evangelist, Dr Billy Graham visited the burnt out Indian Market. He spoke to stallholders while walking among through the ruins. Dr Graham prayed for help with a small group of stallholders.\textsuperscript{5} The Medical Officer of Health, Dr C.R. McKenzie inspected the undamaged portion of the Indian Market. After which, he gave permission for meat, fish and offal which had been there overnight to be sold. The Director of Markets, Brian J. Johnson ordered that no fresh meat be brought in. The market was closed when all the meat was sold.\textsuperscript{6}

The fire posed the Durban Post Office with a dilemma. They did not know where to send the mail addressed to stallholders. The mail used to be sent to the administration office at the Indian Market. However by the 21 March, a makeshift post office was established at the Market by the Durban Corporation. All it consisted of was a chair occupied by an Indian policeman and a cardboard box filled with letters addressed 'c/o of the Indian Market, Durban'.\textsuperscript{7}
A week after the fire, a survey by the Durban Indian Market Stallholders' Association showed that the destitute market workers needed bare essentials like milk, butter and bread. The Association said that R500 a day was needed to provide for them. Hundreds of employees needed money to pay for rents. Many also faced the prospect of losing their furniture through non-payment of installments. Since many of the stallholders had lost their livelihood in the fire, the Mayor Durban, Councillor Ron Williams, on 20 March 1973 launched a relief fund for the Indian Market stallholders. A five-man committee comprised of Dr M.B. Naidoo (executive member of the SAIC), I.C. Limbada (secretary of the Durban Indian Benevolent Society), R.J. (secretary of the Indian Market Stallholders' Association), A. Gooden (a municipal official) and B.J. Johnson (the Market Master). 8

This step was necessary under the circumstances. According to Dr K. Goonam, Vice-President of the Helping Hands Society:

"Social workers in the society found families who are in dire distress. They could not afford mealie meal, let alone bread. Children went hungry. Within days of the fire, some children could not go to school because their parents had no money for the bus fare... Many of the people whose lives depended on the market, lived from hand to mouth.....some of the poorer stallholders were not registered so they
could not claim unemployment benefits. They have tried getting other jobs; but it is not easy."  

Thirty four year old Marimuthu Moodley was one such person. He had a wife and four children whose ages ranged from two to nine years. Every morning, Moodley got up at four o'clock and trudged the streets for employment. The answer was always the same: 'Sorry, we have no vacancies.' The family had to pocket their pride and appeal to the Durban Indian Benevolent Society for a weekly food parcel. Moodley's wife who had never worked in her life, went round the neighbourhood with her two year old son, doing people's washing at thirty to forty cents a time. The Moodleys were one of the many thousands who faced poverty and starvation through no fault of their own. Another was a sixty-one year old widow, Mrs M. Morar, whose grocery stall was reduced to ashes. She lived, in a flat in Victoria Street, with her daughter, son-in-law (who helped her run the stall) and their two school-going children. Mrs Morar was penniless. On the other hand, fifty three year old Moosa Fakir had enough to last him a month. He lost R500 in the fire which was his whole life savings.

In response to the pleas for help, the Durban Indian Benevolent Society formed a three-man relief committee to take charge of immediate relief. The committee comprised Rajendra Chetty, Dharma Nair and N.G. Moodley. The committee was promised about R6 500 by members of the Indian
community; but until the money arrived, the Society used its own funds to buy food to distribute to the most needy families. By 11 April, the Society had given sixty former employees (involving 218 children) of the Indian Market food vouchers worth R5 each.

Meanwhile police investigations into the Market fire led to the arrest of Mohandas Nagin Choonilall, a twenty six year old tailor. It was established that on the night of the fire (16th March), Choonilall, after being to the cinema, was walking home when he had a black out and fell in Queen Street outside the Indian Market. When he came to, his legs were cold and cramped. He made a small fire in the 'gutter' outside the market to make himself warm. A strong wind came up and scattered the burning papers through the gate into the Indian Market. Warm and unaware that a fire had started in the market, he went home. Mohandas Nagin Choonilall appeared in the Durban Magistrate's Court on 2 May 1973. He was not charged with arson; but with contravention of Section 93 of the city's by-laws; that is 'no person shall make or light any bonfire in the streets of the city without the permission of the Mayor.' Choonilall's plea of guilty was accepted by prosecutor, A. Richmond. No evidence was led by the prosecution. The magistrate, H.A. Steyn in passing sentence said, "This little fire of yours started a much bigger fire; but obviously when you made your fire you did not think it would cause any damage. The only thought you had in mind was to warm yourself." The magistrate added that the accused did not
appear to be intelligent and had no money to pay a fine. Choonilall had been employed as a tailor and earned R10 a week; but had no money because he had not worked since his arrest. Hence the magistrate cautioned and discharged Choonilall. 15

The plea for financial assistance for the Indian Market stallholders in the form of the Mayor's Relief Fund drew good responses. Ramal Singh of the Admiral Hotel and Packco (PTY) Limited of Verulam donated R1000 each. By mid-May 1973, the Fund had received cash gifts of R800 from the Helping Hands Society and R500 from Glenton and Mitchell (PTY) Limited. The South African Indian Teachers Association donated R11 250. This boosted the Fund to more than R27 500. The Fund paid out more than R10 600 to stallholders and their dependents. Another R1 325 was paid to the Durban Indian Benevolent Society for the food parcels that the Society had provided from its own funds. 16 In its first month of operation, the Relief Fund helped 313 families. This figure fell to thirty families by October 1973 and none in November. A total of 800 grants were made. In its seven months of operation, the Fund raised about R39 000. All; but R2000 were distributed among the stallholders who lost their livelihood in the fire. The remaining R2000 was handed over to the Durban Indian Benevolent Society which had been asked to help further those affected by the fire. The Mayor's Relief Fund was closed in December 1973. 17
FOOTNOTES


2. In October 1969, seventy-seven trucks and two hundred cartage vehicles and trailers were destroyed in the Cato Creek blaze.


4. Ibid. The records of the Durban Indian Market Stallholders' Association were also destroyed.


14. Chooniwall suffered from a nervous complaint for which he took tablets.


CHAPTER V

5. A NEW BEGINNING?

On 19 March 1973, the Mayor of Durban, Councillor Ron Williams met a deputation of prominent Indians which included S.A.I.C. members, A.M. Rajab and J.N. Reddy. The deputation asked that the Victoria Street Indian Market be rebuilt. However, after the meeting, Rajab said:

"We were not given a definite answer as some city councillors felt that the market was scheduled for demolition at the end of June and it will be a waste of money to rebuild the old market."[1]

Nevertheless hopes were rised when the City Engineer, C.G. Hands reported to the Policy and Finance Committee that the fish mongers and butchers' section of the market could be rebuilt at a cost of R13 150 and be put into operation within seven weeks. However the rest of the market was considered a total loss. Demolition began on Saturday, 24th March because all the brick walls and columns in the area were badly affected by the heat and could not be kept for rebuilding. Only about four metres of the fish and meat section were affected by the fire. The City Engineer's Department undertook, upon itself, to carry out the restoration.^[1]
In supporting the call for the rebuilding of the Indian Market, the editorial of the newsletter issued by the Natal Memom Jamaat, a section of the Muslim community, appealed to the City Council to let the Indian Market 'live again, no matter what'. It called the plans for road development on the market site 'grandiose' and 'nonsensical' when viewed against the plight of those whose 'life blood' was the market. But on Wednesday, 28 March, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor were told by District Commandant of the South African Police that it was unwise to rebuild the market at its former site because of the high incidence of crime in the area. The following day, after a three hour meeting, the Policy and Finance Committee voted against restoring the Indian Market. According to the chairman of the committee, Kieth Morrison, the decision was taken because the City Council only had the power to provide a fresh produce market. Also the Western Freeway 'spurs' were planned to pass through the market site. As well as noting that the tenants had been under notice for as long as six years. The latest was 30 June 1973. The Committee directed the City's Market Master to try to help fresh produce dealers affected by the fire, by obtaining premises for them to operate at the vacant trading sites in Chatsworth. These efforts bore fruit because by the end of March, the Department of Community Development, which owned the Chatsworth Market, made 41 stalls available. These were for fresh produce only because there was no cold storage for fish, poultry and meat. The Chatsworth Market was to be administered by the Durban Corporation until it became established.
10. DEMOLITION OF THE BURNT OUT INDIAN MARKET

(SOURCE: FIAT LUX, DECEMBER 1973, p.23)
The City Council's decision not to restore the market was strongly criticised at a meeting organized by the Durban Indian Market Stallholders' Association at the M.L. Sultan Technical College on Saturday, 31 March 1973. An Action Committee of fourteen leading Durban Indians and the trade unionist, Harriet Bolton was formed to launch a campaign to restore the Indian Market. The committee was headed by Fatima Meer, a Natal University lecturer. The committee comprised: Dr Arusah Singh, Dr K. Goonam, Mrs Harriet Bolton, R.S. Naidoo, A.M. Moolla, M. Sultan, L. Nelson, H.H. Dhupelia, Dr K. Ginwala, Daddy Moodliar, N.G. Moodley, Dhanpal Naidoo, Dharma Nair and J.T. Bhoola. The stallholders, at the meeting, unanimously adopted an Action Committee resolution:

"...this meeting deplores the refusal of the City Council to accept that it has a duty to the people of Durban in restoring the market. It records that this market is an essential amenity which serves the city as a whole and that it is imperative that the market is restored at or near the previous site in Victoria Street and that in the meantime a temporary structure be erected at the old beerhall site or some suitable place in the same area."6

Another critic of the City Council's decision was Peter Mansfield, regional director of the Natal Coastal Region of the Progressive Party:
"The Council's attitude showed a lack of concern for the welfare of thousands of people who had suffered financially from the destruction of the market. It is shortsighted because it completely ignores the fact that the market was one of Durban's few real tourist attractions. Every year thousands of tourists had the Indian Market on the top of their lists of sights to be seen....the truth of the matter is that if this were an election year and the ratepayers affected were White voters, councillors would be falling over themselves trying to find a solution and trying to provide temporary relief for the suffering. It is scandalous that they should not do so when the suffering are Black non-whites. Almost worse was the fact that the Indians had been rejected by an United Party controlled city council and forced to turn to the Nationalist Government for assistance."7

The Indians did turn to the Nationalist Government for assistance. On 5 April 1973, the chairman of the executive committee of the S.A.I.C., J.N. Reddy met with the Minister of Indian Affairs, Senator Owen Horwood, in Cape Town. Reddy acquainted the Minister with the plight of stallholders, their employees and other dependents who relied on the Indian Market for their livelihood.8 On the same day, in Durban, the Mayor met five members of the Action Committee representing the Indian Market stallholders, namely Fatima Meer, D.K. Singh, A.M. Mooila, George Singh and H.H. Dhupelia. The meeting was also attended by Councillors Raou

Goldman (a former Mayor of Durban) and Dixy Adams (Deputy Mayor) as
well as heads of the Corporation departments, which included C.G. Hands, the City Engineer and O.D. Gorven, the City Treasurer. While discussions continued in the Mayor's Parlour, on the steps of the City Hall, about 200 Indians - many were stallholders and employees at Indian Market - staged a silent protest. The men sat on the City Hall steps, beneath signs that read: 'GIVE US OUR DAILY BREAD' and 'WHERE DO WE GET OUR MONEY TO BUY OUR DAILY FOOD?' Meanwhile inside the City Hall, agreement was reached on three points:

1. The market was a vital amenity to the consumers of Durban, particularly the poorer citizens.

2. Its sudden closure had imposed grave hardships on stallholders, their employees and on consumers. Its temporary re-erection was an urgent necessity.

3. The City Council was the best qualified body to re-establish the market as a service to the consumers.

However the meeting was adjourned when the Mayor received a telephone call, which urgently summoned him to Cape Town for talks with the Minister of Community Development, A.H. du Plessis and the Minister of Indian Affairs, Senator Owen Horwood.

In Cape Town, the following day, the Mayor of Durban, Ron Williams met the two ministers concerned. They discussed possible ways and means of finding a solution to the problem of rebuilding the Indian Market. The
discussions were described as 'thorough going and constructive'.

This 'thorough going and constructive' discussion led to the Minister of Indian Affairs, Senator Owen Horwood announcing on 12 April 1973 that the Durban City Council had agreed to provide temporary facilities for stallholders and traders who had not been able to find alternative accommodation after the fire. But according to the Minister:

"These facilities will be of limited duration because of pending rail and road developments in the area. In addition, it is the intention to make use of trading facilities for fresh produce dealers at the market centre, Unit Three, Chatsworth. On the long term basis, it is also proposed to stimulate the development of trading facilities in the Indian group areas which, in itself, will make available accommodation should displaced traders wish to avail themselves thereof."

As a result of the Government, Durban City Council and S.A.I.C., all agreeing to cooperate in finding a solution to the problems arising from the destruction of the Indian Market. Hence, the Minister of Indian Affairs took steps in establishing a joint committee consisting of one representative from each of the Departments of Indian Affairs and of Community Development, the Durban City Council and the S.A.I.C. The committee was under the chairmanship of J.H. de W. van Eyssen, regional representative of the Department of Indian affairs for Natal. The task of this joint state-civic working committee was to find an 'equitable
solution' to the problems caused by the destruction of the Indian Market. 12

Nevertheless the Natal Indian Congress (N.I.C.) launched a campaign to canvass support from the citizens of Durban to press for the rebuilding of the Indian Market. Harriet Bolton speaking at a N.I.C. mass meeting, in the Kajee Memorial Hall, on Sunday, 15 April 1973 said:

"The Indian Market should be rebuilt at or near its present site because it served all the communities of Durban. The market was a shopping centre not only for Indians, but also for Africans, Coloureds and Whites. The market was a shopping centre for all races where there was no such thing as apartheid; but when the market burnt it became an Indian problem." 13

Speaking on the same platform, Solomon Ngobese, the Mayor of Umlazi said that the burning of the market had caused hardships not only to Indians, but also the Africans, Coloureds and Whites. He estimated that a million people from Umlazi, Lamontville, KwaMashu, Chatsworth, Merebank and the Coloured townships depended on the market for the purchase of their goods. He said that whenever there were plans for development it was always the Blacks who had to suffer: 'Blacks are entitled to all that the White man is entitled to'. 14
The campaign to gain support for the rebuilding of the Indian Market was given a boost, on 25 April 1973, when a petition organized by the Women's Cultural Group was presented, by its president, Mrs Z.G.H. Mayet, to J.H. de W. van Eyssen, chairman of the Joint State-Civic Committee. The petition was signed by more than 10 000 people. It was signed by 6 752 Indians, 2 875 Whites, 225 Africans, 166 Coloureds, 264 White tourists and 150 people whose particular race classification was unknown. The petition highlighted three points why the market should be re-established in the central business area. These were:

1. The market was an integral part of the city and had historical associations which should be preserved.

2. As a tourist attraction of international fame, it helped the country's economy.

3. It provided a livelihood for many citizens and offered commodities at cheap prices to thousands.

Meanwhile the joint committee of representatives of the Departments of Indian Affairs and of Community Development, the Durban City Council and S.A.I.C. decided that fresh produce dealers would be offered temporary accommodation at the Chatsworth Market. However at a packed meeting held by the Durban Indian Stallholders' Association in the Vedic Hall, on 30 April, the stallholders unanimously decided not to move to the Chatsworth Market. The chairman of the S.A.I.C.'s executive
committee, J.N. Reddy warned the stallholders that they:

"...can forget about the Bantu beerhall and the meat market because these are not going to be made available to you. Unfortunately I am not in a position to divulge the reasons why they will not be available." [16]

Nevertheless the stallholders accepted the resolution which read:

"We believe that it is unjust and inequitable that any particular section or group should be excluded from the market (namely the fresh produce dealers). We request the authorities to supply suitable amenities for all those who previously traded in the market, without discrimination of any kind. This meeting therefore requests the officials of the Association to convey this decision to the authorities concerned." [17]

Disregarding the Indian Market Stallholders' opinion, the Minister of Indian Affairs, Senator Owen Horwood announced on 17 May 1973 that the Government had made R100 000 available to finance the construction of temporary premises on the old market site in Victoria Street. This was to accommodate stallholders who could not be resettled by the joint committee. Hence fresh produce dealers were excluded. The site and services were to be provided by the Durban City Council who was also responsible for the administration of the shopping complex which was to
be erected with the approval of the Department of Community
Development.18

On 30 May 1973, in the House of Assembly in Cape Town, the Minister of
Indian affairs said that the new temporary Indian Market would be
erected. He erred in adding that:

"...everything was there including
money for the project, the only
thing lacking was the willingness
of the (Durban City) Council
which in fact decided officially
to do nothing..."19

The Durban City Council had asked for an assurance that the temporary
structure would be up for only three years. The Opposition in
Parliament, in the form of the Natal United Party leader, Radclyffe
Cadman, hit back with angry attack on the Government's treatment of
Indians. Cadman pointed out:

"For the past 35 years, the
Nationalists have been trying
to break the economic power
of the Indians and that the
Indian community in every
town had been driven ten miles
into the veld. Mr Val Volker,
Member of Parliament for Klip
River had vehemently opposed
Indian business rights in Grey
Street, which was the backbone
of Indians... What is the
position of the Durban City
Council...which is not run by the United Party? Firstly they were acting on the strong opposition of the South African Police to the rebuilding of the market. Secondly a ring road is planned through the market place. As for Grey Street, we have pleaded for its extention as an Indian area; but the Nationalists were against it."

A month later, the Durban City Council applied and obtained, in terms of the proclamation in the Provincial Gazette of 29 June 1973, the consent of the Administrator of Natal, Ben Havermann to build shopping facilities and to let stalls to Indian on the old Indian Market site. The City Council needed the consent because they were precluded from building a market in terms of Local Government Ordinance No. 21 of 1942. The Administrator's consent was to operate for a period of three years only. The new 'Indian Market' in Victoria Street was opened officially on Saturday, 30 November 1973. The new 'Indian Market' was built at a cost of R109 527. The state contributed R100 000 and the City Council, the outstanding amount. The new 'Indian Market' accommodated 66 stallholders, mainly curio dealers. 21

The opening of the new 'Indian Market' should have marked a new beginning; but in fact, it marked the beginning of the end for the stallholders. Fifty two fresh produce dealers were excluded from the
11. THE NEW 'INDIAN MARKET'

(SOURCE: FIAT LUX, DECEMBER 1973, p.23)

12. BOYS WAIT OUTSIDE MARKET

(SOURCE: F. MEER: PORTRAIT OF INDIAN SOUTH AFRICANS, p.98)
new 'Indian Market'. Forty two of them refused to go to Chatsworth on the grounds that they had more rights than curio-dealers to trade in Victoria Street. 22 These fresh produce dealers were left in the cold and forced to fend for themselves. In 1974, engineering work continued on the Western Freeway. A start was made on the spur roads off the Western Freeway at Warwick Avenue, linking the Berea Road section to the central business district. From the West Street Cemetery, 1 400 remains were removed and re-interred. In 1978, the new 'Indian Market' was demolished to allow for the freeway to be constructed. Traders who had occupied this temporary site were moved into the former Bulk Sales Hall in Warwick Avenue. This hall housed the curio, grocery, spice and fish traders. 23 The traders have been given notice to vacate the hall at the end of 1988.
FOOTNOTES


12. Ibid.


14. Ibid.


17. Ibid.


20. Ibid.


CONCLUSION

This essay is an account of the Victoria Street Market's birth, its growth as a tourist attraction and its unfortunate destruction. One can dispel the theory that the market represented to the Indian a monument and symbol erected by the town council of Durban in 1910, as their acceptance that the Indian had made a big contribution to the development of Natal's agricultural resources. Indeed the Indians were able to cultivate crops from land that was once swamp and bush. However the Indian Market was no monument to the Indian people. Comments in the Mayor's Minutes prior to 1910, clearly indicate that the town council, especially the Mayor of Durban wanted Indians located in their own areas. This included not only residence; but trade as well. The Natal Dealers' Licences Act of 1897 played a significant role in confining Indian businesses to the Grey Street complex of the central business district because the number of Indian traders were reduced and eliminated from the 'European' areas of businesses, for example West Street. The Indian Market firmly established itself, and around it Indian trade operated. Thus the Indian Market was a monument to the segregationists.

Originally the Indian Market may have been intended to specifically provide for the needs of the Indian community; but in the years after 1910, it was attended by many Whites. They obtained their requirements
in a short time and avoided the waiting round the auction sales which was unavoidable under the system of selling at the Borough Market (later City Market). Any increased cost was more than compensated for by the time and effort saved. Whereas to other population groups, it offered the opportunity to buy foodstuffs at the cheapest prices.

In the following years, the Indian Market in Victoria Street became an institution. It was a profitable venture for, both, stallholders and the City Council. It was second only to Durban's beaches as a tourist attraction. But Durban was growing. The growth of the city did not automatically bring benefits. Quaint and quiet streets gave way to wide, characterless thoroughfares. Elegant old buildings were replaced by cubes of glass and steel. Families had to move from homes that happened to stand in the path of progress. Some people gain, such as the developers, the wise investors, those fortunate enough to be in the right place at the right time; but not everybody was happy.

In this instance, the Indian stallholders at the Indian Market were the losers. The Indian Market stood in the way of providing Durban with an outlet from the central business district, namely the Western Freeway. However, the Durban City Council's attempts to evict the Indian stallholders were underhand. The Council attempted to close down the market by condemning it as a health and fire hazard. These claims were legitimate; but the Council did not keep its promise to
provide the stallholders with alternative accommodation.

An Indian consortium was formed to build a new market on the site of the former African beerhall and Durban Home for Men; but the intervention of the S.A.I.C. led to the Minister of Planning nullifying the plan. The Minister laid down that the City Council had to build the market. With this development, the Indian stallholders and City Council ran foul of the Group Areas Act. The stallholders needed a permit to occupy the new market when and if it was completed. The City Council, on the other hand, legally claimed, it could not build the market because the Indian market was really a shopping complex. The Council was prevented from building shopping complexes by Local Government Ordinance No. 21 of 1942. This meant that the City Council was obliged to build a market. It is thus ironic that in November 1973, the City Council had built a new 'Indian Market' that excluded fresh produce dealers. In other words, the new 'Indian Market' was a shopping complex. The significance of this is that the fresh producers dealers were enrolled as actors playing out the group areas scenario of providing facilities for Indians in their own areas. The occupation of the Chatsworth Market, by the fresh produce dealers would have been a coup for the ideologues of separate development. The new 'Indian Market' opened on 30 November 1973; but it was to be a temporary structure. Since events after this date, is beyond the range of this study, it would not be doing justice to the subject to examine them in
this discussion.

The events involving the Victoria Street Indian Market after March 1973, illustrates how access to political rights determines one's relationship to the means of production, that is a lack of political power can threaten one's economic independence, namely to work for yourself by owning your own business. It is obvious through trade, the Indian can and has grown prosperous; but Durban has also benefitted by his prosperity, making it a better place to live in. Nevertheless the Indian is still a voteless citizen of Durban. Voiceless does not mean voiceless; but definitely powerless to control decisions that affected in this instance, his economic interests. It is this very position which clearly demonstrated the stallholders' helplessness in deciding their destiny. The fire on 16 March 1973 did what the City Council could not do, that is evict the stallholders from the Indian Market. This gave the Council a free hand in building the Western Freeway because the stallholders were reliant on the City Council for the restoration of the Indian Market. The stallholders should have had the right to engage in free enterprise. They were not asking for charity. The stallholders wanted to trade; but that right lay in the ashes of the Victoria Street Indian Market.
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