Digging Up Zimbabwean Gold Miners:
An Anthropological Study of Artisanal Gold Mining
in Central Mozambique

By

William Nham

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Abstract

This thesis explores the politics and practices of artisanal gold mining in Fenda, a small site in Manica Province, Mozambique. The emphasis is on the movement of Zimbabweans across the border and into this specific industry. Due to the increasing informalisation within the Zimbabwean economy, the livelihoods and social lives of miners have spanned Zimbabwe's borders in order for them to pursue individual life projects. Because of their participation within an informal economy in Mozambique, I argue that Zimbabwean gold miners' access and understandings of belonging are mediated through their mining practices and knowledges, which are shaped by ongoing negotiations with local actors. The narratives of Zimbabwean miners in Fenda reflect a history of displacement, hardship, and "getting by" as they attach themselves to the booms-and-busts of the gold economy.

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Chapter 1: Down the Mining Hole

As I stared down at the opening of the mine shaft, I began to have second-thoughts about entering. Like many first-time *gwejas*¹, I had apprehensions about climbing down a ten-metre-deep man-made shaft. As newcomers, many miners begin with less risky work as panners or porters. However, entering the mine was a privileged part of my research as miners constantly offered me the opportunity to glimpse into their working lives. Participant-observation, as textbooks and disciplinary narratives maintain, is the foremost method of the would-be anthropologist. Entering into the “field” is fraught with its own unique challenges and decisions. In this circumstance, I chose to follow miners underground and put myself in a position to understand the kinds of physical risks they undergo each time they enter the mine.

Inside mine tunnels, miners work tirelessly through the day and night. To enter a mine, the fear of being buried alive is pushed away. I also pushed away that eerie feeling away as I climbed into the mine. I first moved downwards through the main shaft then laterally into the tunnels. Miners dig out steps into the sides of the mine shaft, so that hands and feet can gain purchase: imagine an embedded ladder of sorts. As I reached the bottom, I ducked into a small tunnel about a metre-and-a-half in diameter to find my friend, Eric, working in the dark with a small flashlight lighting the tunnel. Eric is a Zimbabwean who crossed over illegally last year to find work in Mozambique. Like Eric, many other Zimbabweans continue cross illegally each year. Of those “border-jumpers”²,

¹ *Gweja* is chiShona slang term for miners.

² Border-jumpers is a slang term for illegal border crossers.

many also find themselves working in artisanal gold mining, informal small-scale operations, as miners, gold buyers, or vendors. Zimbabwean labour has, in part, propelled the expansion local gold economy.

I watched Eric as he chiselled the earth with a long steel pry-bar with a sharpened-tip. The ringing from steel-meeting-earth rang clearly with each strike while we carried on our conversation. Eric had a confrontation with mine trespassers earlier in the day. According to Eric, a few *gombiros*³ were found digging without permission. Having been discovered by Eric's friend, Oracio, they threatened to kill him. Eric came soon after to mediate the situation. "We were at each other's throats," Eric claimed. The situation was eventually resolved with the *gombiros* leaving with their "stolen" mining samples. These kinds of confrontations with other miners are common as rumours circulate widely and quickly about rich mines.

At the end of our underground chat, Eric loaded his own sample into large burlap sacks. I came up to the surface first. Eric followed me balancing a bag on his back as he moved up carefully. A loss in balance or concentration would mean that he would drop up to ten metres to the bottom of the mine shaft. However, he was quite comfortable with the risks after working in the industry for over a year. I was not, and paid careful attention to my steps as I shadowed Eric to the river. I, the newcomer and foreigner, did not understand these spaces in quite the same way as Eric. Walking with him through the vast fields, mine shafts appeared across the terrain only metres apart. Most of the mines were abandoned with vegetation overgrowth or showing cracks inside the mine shaft.

³ *Gombiro* is chiShona slang for thieves.

With the high concentration of mining activity, the land has undergone a substantial transformation. Furthermore, it is mainly men populating these fields. Working in informally organised labour groups called syndicates, some washed their samples in the river, while others dug underneath. Entering the mines is an unmistakably masculine role.

Mining as a practice is much more complex and involves people that occupy different roles in the extraction and sale of gold. I disaggregate artisanal gold miners by acknowledging mining as a gendered cultural practice. In my research, I focus largely on male Zimbabwean miners. *Gwejas* are men who enter into the mines and remove the earth. They may perform other tasks, but *gwejas* typically distinguish themselves through this work. While moving the bags of earth to the river, *jaggas*⁴ exclusively accomplish much of the heavy lifting. These are also men who regularly carry bags of earth weighing up to fifty kilograms. Vendors and cooks are generally women who sell supplies, refreshments, and food to the miners. There are also mine owners, field owners, and gold buyers. They all contribute in various ways in the extraction and trade of gold in Fenda, so when referring to a mining economy, I mean to include those who also benefit from this booming industry. In my analysis, however, I focus on the experiences of Zimbabwean miners to explain their roles and practices within this particular economy.

Artisanal gold miners in Fenda engender environments through their daily experiences of moving through these spaces and interacting with other actors. This creates nuanced ecological understandings and representations of mining

⁴ *Jagga* is chiShona slang for porters.

environments that can only be described as cultural. Therefore, the importance of this study centers on the need to examine critically these mining environments, and to further analyse political assertions made over environments. As political projects, environments are characterised by their mobility, scalability, and use. Further, they incorporate dynamic interests, histories, and knowledges within complex and fluid arrangements. To analyse how environments are assembled, I focus on the artisanal gold mining site of Fenda in the province of Manica, Mozambique, because of the intersection between a burgeoning informal economy and a large influx of illegal Zimbabwean migrants. I use Zimbabwean gold miners precisely because of their role in spurring the regional economy while encountering claims of illegitimacy and forms of exclusion. Therefore, Zimbabwean miners especially struggle for recognition and belonging in Fenda. Their livelihoods depend on their access to, and control over, particular environments. Yet people who engage in this industry lack authority and privilege within an escalating contest with other actors—such as neighbouring communities, the police, and the state—for land and resource access. Therefore, this study recognises and highlights the personal narratives of artisanal miners.

Miners come and go every week, but mining activity has been in significant decline since 2010. However, those who remain choose to work under deteriorating conditions. As an anthropologist, I am concerned with the complex and, seemingly, contradictory decisions made by miners. My investigation also touches on the different priorities and motivations of people who are involved in mining. Due to the popular occurrence of artisanal mining in sub-Saharan Africa

(cf. Hinton *et al.* 2003, Hilson 2002, Walsh 2005), an ethnographic account of this topic benefits the understanding of changing resource extraction processes under the current political and economic conditions. Not only does the local context provide a worthwhile point of departure into the economic decline of Zimbabwe and post-war Mozambique, it also provides comparative data with other artisanal mining sites.

Artisanal Gold Mining in Manica

The artisanal gold mining industry is growing in central Mozambique as it offers a significant source of income to both miners and the state. Currently, 20,000 people in central Mozambique are directly and indirectly engaged in artisanal gold mining (Dondeyne *et al.* 2009:46). This number represents a significant number of people and refers to the importance of the industry in the region. During the colonial era, this practice was forbidden. However, between 1992 and 1995, artisanal gold mining became more intensive in Manica following the end of the civil war and a sustained drought (Manuel 1999:230). According to a survey completed by Isidro Manuel (1999:231), agriculture is the primary economic activity in the area, but gold mining is a much more profitable venture. More precisely, artisanal gold miners in Manica earn four times more than farmers in other regions of Mozambique (Dondeyne *et al.* 2009:47). Therefore, in the post-war period, people have increasingly sought out mining to supplement their livelihoods due to the decline in agricultural opportunities. In terms of scale, Manica's artisanal gold mining industry output 600 kilograms of gold, accounting for nearly all of the province's gold production in 2007 (Yager 2009; Dondeyne

2009:48). This particular industry generates a substantial amount of regional income, especially as the price of gold continues to set record levels within global trade markets⁵.

As participation within the industry expands, the state has had increasing difficulty dealing with miners. To regulate artisanal mining in the region, the state's Mining Development Fund provides registered miners with technical and financial support, but only those belonging to officially-recognised mining associations are eligible (Dondeyne *et al.* 2009:45). This is problematic as only 30% of the miners are registered within these organisations. This indicates that there is a large set of "illegal" miners, both Zimbabwean and Mozambican. Therefore, the current set of regulations poses issues for miners and policy-makers alike. In their study, Dondeyne *et al.* (2009:46) claim that miners are highly mobile, coming in from distant locations, including neighbouring countries, and creating a situation where "the provincial services would be overwhelmed if they were to given individual mining passes to these large and fluid groups of miners." Artisanal mining is extremely difficult to monitor and control. Moreover, it engenders novel forms of political practice, organisation, and participation that need to be further analysed within these contexts.

During the growth of the artisanal gold mining in Fenda, the population of women working and living has grown significantly. Thus, gender relations within Fenda are also changing. Their increased participation is linked to the new roles that they are taking on within this period of political and economic uncertainty in

⁵ Global market prices hit a record trading price of \$1900 US dollars per ounce during the period of my research (Tang and Harvey 2011)

Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Hinton *et al.* (2003) and Labonne (1996) suggest that artisanal gold mining presents new socio-political spaces for women to occupy by providing economic opportunities not available to them in the past. In Munhena, a site within a few kilometres of Fenda, Shandro *et al.* (2009:528) found that in a population 5000 people, approximately 80% of the women and 30% of the children are engaged in the artisanal gold mining. Working mainly as vendors and cooks, women's livelihoods depend on this booming economy, much like men, in order to send money home and to meet social commitments in other places. Further, women's forms of participation in Fenda are mediated through religious traditions, which define social roles and gendered spaces. An examination of the religious aspects of mining would highlight the changing gender dynamics in Fenda. However, within the context of my thesis, I focus on the issues of power and access among male Zimbabwean miners.

Mining Theory

Anthropology has yet to focus on artisanal mining as a wide-spread practice within the "developing" world. Within the discipline, the anthropology of mining has largely focused on formal mining operations (e.g. Banks and Ballard 2003; Godoy 1985). These have been particularly useful for understanding the dynamics of social, political, economic, and cultural transition in relation to material and ecological changes. Also, the scale of formal mining operations involves a diversity of transnational actors with various levels of involvement. However, this disciplinary focus avoids the theoretical and empirical questions that arise when miners engage in their own operations. Thus, artisanal mining is

a fruitful area of anthropological research because the practices challenge the existing literature. It provides evidence that artisanal miners initiate and organise their own extractive industries without the direct management of the state or business. However, my contention, though, is that even without formal institutions, mining practices are still conditioned through power relations and more specifically, shaped by various actors.

In other modes of analysis, such as environmental anthropology, artisanal gold mining also contains environmental concerns and actions that arise from mineral extraction on any scale. These concerns have been taken up by anthropologists (cf. Li 2000, Tsing 2005) who contest the primacy of bureaucratic and administrative centres over peripheries, and continue to investigate the tactics employed by people who evade formal regimes of control. Accordingly, the influence of these centres falters in peripheries, such as Fenda. In a way, peripheries offer possibilities to actors—such as miners in this case—to accept, incorporate, and, especially, evade the political programmes of centres. Therefore, the unpacking of “environments” in Fenda reveals geographies linked through the movement of people, materials, and culture. Anna Tsing (2005) suggests that we pay attention to scales and how they become deployed. Scales infer political potential through the shaping of discursive boundaries of knowledge. This is a useful tool because actors tactically bind their knowledge as local, national, or global contexts. In some circumstances, they can preclude histories of interconnection or illuminate them. In a way, gold mining co-produces particular environmental concerns and practices that connect this geography to

others in unexpected and hierarchical ways (cf. Gupta and Ferguson 1991). In this research project, I use the narratives of miners to shed light on the political and economic uncertainty currently prevalent in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. These kinds of articulations are ripe for ethnographic scrutiny.

Environmental anthropology also offers the opportunity for researchers to analyse the way in which they also shape access and power within environments. While elaborating on anthropology's engagement with environmentalism, J. Peter Brosius writes,

Environmentalism, broadly defined, is a series of a series of transformative discourses. Our analyses, to the extent that they impinge upon the transformative possibilities of those discourses, are nothing less than direct interventions. We need to attend to the question not only of the circulation and contestation of images and discourses that link local, national, and transnational forms of environmentalism but also of how our own works enter into that equation, possibly to the detriment of those whose struggles we are trying to make sense of. (1999:287)

Brosius's comments push for a reflexive approach towards analysing environmentalism, given the "transformative" qualities of anthropology's academic and theoretical interventions. He, therefore, urges anthropologists to critique their own cultural assumptions about the environment. It is therefore imperative to analyse the environments that anthropologists produce and deploy as well. Not to get lost in interpreting representations, I want to show environments that miners live in are very much real as they have both material and non-material consequences. Therefore, I find this type of anthropology is a useful approach because it uses environments as an entry point into exploration of social and cultural issues. In general, anthropology's approach gives particular

attention to how situated actors—such as vendors, buyers, miners, and university students—assemble political practices and imaginations in culturally-specific ways. Therefore, I focus on the unexpected outcomes, prolonged hopes, revisions to life projects, and struggles of miners in their attempts to manage these consequences. Nothing is simple, especially for miners in Fenda.

To explore an encounter between mining and environments, I start with looking at the specific forms of power that emerge when miners assemble environments. Therefore, I use political ecology to focus on the ways actors make claims upon rights, land, and resources. Nancy Lee Peluso and Michael Watts, leading academics within this field, write “[political ecology] accounts for ways that specific resource environments... and environmental processes are constituted by, and in part constitute, the political economy of access to and control over resources” (2001:5). This perspective treats the environment not as a natural object, but as a terrain over which political imaginations are informed, constructed, and defended. Peluso and Watts also mention, “political ecologists recognize that any concern with environmental politics must be sensitive to the expanded repertoire of forms of political practice, that is to say, to a deepened sense of the forms of contention themselves” (2001:25). Referring back to Brosius’s comments, reflexivity is required to appreciate the manners in which anthropological assumptions about environments (mis)recognise forms of political practice. If environments are positioned as cultural politics, then the focus shifts to analysing the maintenance and control over representations.

Inflecting this perspective through a gendered lens is another way of sharpening my approach. Given the gendered work involved in the artisanal gold mining industry, incorporating a feminist perspective provides a more nuanced understanding of the particular environments present in the region. Further, the conceptualisation of politics was dramatically re-shaped by feminist theories in the 1970s. Carol Hanisch (1969) came up with the basic mantra for the feminist movement: the personal is political. This phrase redefines everyday practices as important struggles over social roles and recognition. From this position, feminist discourse complements understandings of political ecology. Dianne Rocheleau, Barbara Thomas-Slayter, and Esther Wangari write, "feminist political ecology treats gender as a critical variable in shaping resource access and control, interacting with class, caste, race, culture and ethnicity to shape processes of ecological change, the struggle of men and women to sustain ecologically viable livelihoods, and the prospects of any community for 'sustainable development'" (1996:4). This theoretical framework takes into consideration the concerns of post-structuralism and third-wave feminism as paradigm-shifts that criticise the essentialist categories in many modes of analysis. For example, Dianne Rocheleau *et al.* (1996) emphasise the importance of Kenyan women's ecological knowledge in securing food, water and plant resources for their families in semi-arid regions. This gendered knowledge reflects the importance of female labour and social activity. However, in their study, they also found that women were consistently marginalised from legal entitlements in the regions of Kenya as well. This particular situation reflects how these unfavourable political

conditions shape women's agency. Further, it parallels the similar instances of land and resource inaccessibility by women in Fenda. They have assumed particular roles as vendors and, in some cases, land and mine ownership. While women were not my main collaborators of my field research, working through the roles and expectations of miners requires an analysis of how their narratives reflect *gendered* environments, more specifically, masculine ones. Therefore, feminist political ecology speaks to how certain environments reflect the roles men take up as well as they manage "ecologically viable livelihoods".

Understandably, feminist political ecology discusses how particularly gendered ecologies form within artisanal gold mining settlements, and how they become arranged spatially and politically. However, this theory only addresses the configurations of power and discipline that emerge from material arrangements and exchanges. To make this more sensitive to the narratives of my research participants and merge it with an anthropological analysis, I focus on the cultural aspects that shape *environmentalisms* around miners' representations and understandings. Therefore, I focus on mining identities as a form of political practice. Through their practices, Zimbabwean miners carve out a particular role for themselves as *gwejas* and, more secretly, as *gombiros*. Their willingness to use these identities links them socially and politically to the land in forms of belonging. In my estimation, feminist political ecology avoids this cultural sensitivity because it denotes the relationship between gendered individuals and a *neutral* environment. The concept of environmentalisms then is used intentionally to highlight both the importance of miner's personal narratives, while

also emphasising the role of social, economic, political and cultural processes in shaping mining practices.

To address these narratives, I use the works of Anna Tsing to discuss particular cultural environments that have formed upon Manica. In doing so, I wish to highlight the ways in which these culturally-specific environments rub up against each other. Anna Tsing states, “[c]ultures are continually co-produced in the interactions I call ‘friction’: the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of connection across difference” (2005:3-4). Her approach focuses on the outcomes of these awkward encounters. Moreover, it acknowledges the flimsy, yet potentially powerful, nature of these connections. Therefore, the discursive aspects are highlighted by an analysis of the miners’ narratives. The connections that have formed between miners and their environments are a way of articulating the political economic history in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Tsing (2005:9) further describes this engagement as the formation of specific avenues that connect the powerful and powerless. Through these connections, environmentalisms forge new political spaces. By taking on this perspective, the interactions between environmentalisms are not to be seen as sites of imperialism or resistance, committed forms of organisation and power, but rather understood as productive spaces where meanings are negotiated.

Fieldwork Practicalities

I conducted my field research in Fenda between July and September 2011. Articles written by Shandro *et al.* (2009) and Spiegel *et al.* (2006) led me into the area. Initially, I chose Munhena as a research site because it was the

only place referred to in recent articles written about artisanal gold mining in the region. A few kilometres northwest of Vila de Manica, the site provided me with a starting point for familiarising with local mining activities. When I arrived, I found a small artisanal mining site and a formalised medium-scale operation. I began my research there, but slowly moved away from it as my initial interests focused more on a larger site with informal social structures. Therefore, I inquired about other sites in the area and was directed to Fenda. Arriving in Fenda, it fit into my initial expectations as a large, informal settlement with a sizeable population of miners—numbering over a few hundred—and with the infrastructure for sustaining these numbers. My expectations and personal interests shaped the outcome of my research as I selected my field site to match these criteria.

While in the field, my primary mode of data gathering was through participant-observation. I travelled to Fenda daily to observe, and speak with miners. From my base in Vila de Manica⁶, I took local transport along with other miners and community members into the next valley. These crowded mini-vans and flatbed trucks crammed livestock, materials, tools, groceries and passengers into cramped and, frankly, unsafe arrangements. The “technical” aspects of fieldwork emerged through my gradual involvement in local living experiences. As per anthropological tradition, I established myself in Fenda for an extended period of time, and positioned myself as a student researcher from Canada. Participant-observers are “outsiders who participate in some aspects of life around them and record what they can” (Bernard 2006:347). Therefore, I

⁶ I also refer to Vila de Manica as town on several occasions because it is the largest settlement in the area and the last stop on the Beira corridor that extends from Beira to the border at Machipanda.

observed and documented daily how miners engaged in mining and other social practices. These observations formed the basis for my understanding of their particular ecological commitments.

Initially, I depended on walking through the fields and down to the river as my method for meeting interested participants. Through this means, I found that many men were curious enough to speak with me based on my novelty in Fenda. Taking advantage of this, I met and spoke with the same people on successive days. This period allowed for us to build a rapport and a basis of shared experience. So much about participant-observation is not only in the “technical” aspects, but also touches on the emotive realms of doing fieldwork. The method rests on the basic premise of building long-term social relationships while in the field. I earned a distinct amount of goodwill by appearing daily to talk, walk, work, eat, and drink with the miners. Much of what they said to me relied on their trust of me and their understanding my objectives. This did not come easily at first because many assumed that I was there for gold: just like them! To explicate, I used “hanging out” as a method to build “rapport” within the community (Bernard 2006:368). By spending an extended time within Fenda, I gained access to both mundane and marked social events. Furthermore, I allowed many of these relationships to grow “organically” from trust and stability. Eric and Lucky were my primary research participants because we befriended each other, which provided me with a substantial amount of access into their lives.

During my time with my research participants, I conducted informal interviews. This was my initial method “characterized by a total lack of structure

or control", but with intensive note-taking from memory (Bernard 2006:211). Considering that it took time to find participants during my stay in Manica, I also used this method initially to get a "feel" for my research site, and the types of interactions and reactions that I was encountering. Other anthropologists have also characterised this part of the research as "deep hanging out" (Geertz 1998:69). Spending long periods of time with miners allowed me to glean observations and stories. They shared experiences which bothered them, made them laugh, scared them, and so on. These conversations contained valuable insights into their perspectives, and how they assessed their situations. However, I feel that the tone shifted a bit as they learned more about me and my interests. These informal interviews were defined by the shifting and negotiated relationship between us: an ethnographic space in which we formed expectations and roles around our relationships. At the end of my research period, I could also see the avenues that were opening up to me as my collaborators brought me to other mining sites and to meet other people. The scale of my social networks and research site kept expanding as time went on.

To guide the conversations towards learning more about my research participants, I used unstructured and semi-structured interviews as a mode of learning about their life histories. Resembling a casual conversation, I used unstructured interviewing to get at the "lived experience" of participants (Bernard 2006:213). This process was participant-led and delved into their concerns and preoccupations without much guidance on my part. In this approach to gathering data, I privileged their narratives over my own research concerns. I found this

method was more reactive on my part as I needed to respond quickly to their situations and conversation prompts to ask follow-up questions. Mostly, I asked them to expand on their thoughts, or to explain complex social interactions and cultural practices. By asking them to continue their thoughts, the miners were able to delve more into their personal motivations and expectations in the moment. This was an indirect way of getting at particular information.

I used semi-structured interviews with a prepared interview guide as a way of gathering data to compare the experiences of participants from a wide-variety of backgrounds (Bernard 2006:212). I focused on Zimbabwean men in these interviews because of my ability to develop a working rapport with them. I managed to interview ten Zimbabwean men, two Zimbabwean women, four Mozambican men, and one Mozambican woman. Mainly, I used this as an opportunity for them to elaborate on research questions that I found pertinent to my project. These sorts of interviews clarified uncertainties and generated a form for their accounts. When speaking with my research participants, I focused on their lives before they came to Fenda, their personal reasons for mining, and their continuing social obligations. I wanted to understand their life histories, so that I could relate their narratives to their current roles.

My methods guided the content of my research and allowed me to expand on my research objectives while in the field. Further, the interviews were the product of designed and attentive work. However, much of the labour that shaped my research was spent on the practical aspects of fieldwork, finding an appropriate site to conduct my research, finding accommodations during my stay,

transport between my house and Fenda, and so on. So much of what anthropologists do renders simple tasks such as conversation into technical skills, while more complex tasks such as finding contacts and a home in the area are trivialised. In my field experience, I found that these practical aspects shaped the outcomes of my project by forming limitations upon my ability to access Fenda.

In my experience, time was my main limitation. Because of time constraints, I was not able to sustain a large network of collaborators during my field research. Building up a relationship of trust with individuals takes a sizeable amount of patience and energy, and, because of this, I could not focus my research on more than a few miners. My research period also limited the scope of my social networks and observations. Conducting social research is always an unfinished and unsatisfying process as there are always more questions to ask and more people to speak with. Therefore, I had difficulties deciding on when to leave Fenda. However, the reflexive process of ethnographic writing is one method of calibrating the richness of my field research.

My choice of working in the dry season also affected some qualities of my research data. Agricultural work comes to a halt during this period, and the mines in Fenda become safer due to less groundwater affecting the tunnels, which leads to the increased numbers of miners. Because my fieldwork coincided with this time, I was able to observe much more activity in and around Fenda than if I had arrived during the wet season.

My position as a male and foreign researcher also limited my ability to befriend women and children in my research. I found it difficult to approach them, even with introductions. I managed to speak with some, but not on a frequent or casual basis. This limited some of the research objectives as I did not feel comfortable approaching them and asking to spend more time with them. I did not perceive these as permanent barriers, but constraints due to the limited time frame of my research. This made it difficult to build the types of bonds with a more diverse sample of people. Befriending and speaking with Zimbabwean men was definitely easier for me as they were less hesitant and would sometimes beckon me to speak with them. Therefore, my research is skewed and reflects mainly their perspectives.

Third, another major limitation was my inability to speak chiShona. This was the most common language of communication spoken by Zimbabweans and Mozambicans alike as the local vernacular of chiManica is related to chiShona—an official language of Zimbabwe. I was able to speak basic Portuguese with some Mozambicans, but my limited proficiency led me to befriend Zimbabwean men who were conversant in English. This linguistic focus allowed me to talk and speculate with them about a broader range of subjects.

These barriers profoundly shaped my research. I was able to spend more of my limited time with Zimbabwean men and built strong relationships that led me in particular research directions. Through these connections, I was able to gain access into their syndicates and social networks. Some of my interviews were arranged by my research participants who spoke to others about me. These

avenues opened up because I was able to devote much of my time to a select number of people. The methods I employed point to a specific and nuanced experience, shaped by my expectations, limited by practicalities, and curated in my ethnographic writing.

Panning for Gold Miners

My thesis unfolds according to my use of a political ecological framework. To argue my case, I focus on articulating the region's recent political economic history with the growth of the artisanal mining industry in the region. This intersection, therefore, uses miner's narratives to understand the individual impact of these large-scale changes on people's social lives and life projects. To build such an argument, I begin in Chapter Two with a focus on the history of labour migration in the region. With the assertion of a political border beginning in the colonial era, people have moved back and forth between Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The border also created differing political and economic conditions on either side which facilitated the movement of people. The onset of wage labour, wars, structural adjustment, and political violence had Mozambicans and Zimbabweans taking advantage of the border. In recent times, the compounding issues have led to massive trend of informalisation within both Zimbabwe and Mozambique pushing workers in the margins of society. It is within these changing border conditions that artisanal mining has boomed.

Chapter Three looks at the personal narratives and histories of Zimbabwean miners. Living within these changing conditions, they have personally experienced the increasing informalisation of the Zimbabwean and

Mozambican economies. Their narratives reflect on their continued lives and obligations within Zimbabwe as they labour in the fields of Manica. Further, miners' experiences of illegal border crossings demonstrate the kinds of risks they undertake in order to augment their livelihoods. These kinds of informal practices spread as newcomers quickly pick them up. However, the informal nature of artisanal gold mining is also fraught with uncertainty. Miners in Fenda must also contend with the shrinking quantities of gold being discovered, and which has led some miners to make to make plans to leave Fenda.

Even during this decline, miners continue to engage in social relationships with other types of actors. Chapter Four discusses the social roles of miners in relation to the demands placed on them by other actors. I focus on three influential groups of actors, the *communiterias*, land owners, and gold buyers. To understand the root of their influence, I look at the motivations and manoeuvres of these actors and how their personal considerations shape the outcomes of miners' practices and understandings. However, miners also negotiate their own access and attachments to their environments. I refer to their identities as *gwejas* and *gombiros* as forms of political practice that justify their presence and importance within the local economy. Further, their understandings within these roles support their feelings of belonging and privilege within Fenda. Thus, their narratives in these circumstances reflect their precarious positions and how they cling on to these associations.

The thesis winds in between a wider analysis of political economy to the more smaller-scale social interactions. Through this articulation, I do not privilege

one scale over the other. Rather, I am concerned with the forms of understanding that arise from when people act on these changes and how those actions also, in turn, shape the formation of wider political economic phenomena. I conclude in Chapter 5 by summarising and reflecting on my analysis and project as a whole. Further, I reflect on my own social roles and belonging in Fenda. Working in the same social settings for long periods of time, anthropologists, too, are subject to the same social and cultural processes that impact the lives of the people that we research.

Chapter 2: Bordering on History

Current Zimbabwean and Mozambican migrants did not come to Fenda recently. Rather, they have come across historic routes. The history in the region of Fenda and the encompassing Manica district points to continuing social, economic, and political ties to Zimbabwe. This chapter documents the political economic history of the relationship between Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The prevailing theme demonstrates a continuing movement across their shared border. Since its inception, the border has been used as a means of opportunity and refuge, linking—rather than dividing—the two countries. Connecting Zimbabwean miners to broader processes that affect migration, this chapter uses the national scale to demonstrate historic events that preceded the movement of gold miners into Fenda. This bases the local ecological configurations within structural changes that have affected the lives of miners.

The reasons for these widespread migrations range from labour recruitment, war, and economic marginalisation. The first section focuses on the colonial period when young Mozambican men were recruited into Rhodesia because of labour shortages. Many left willingly due to the favourable labour conditions in Rhodesia. During their respective independence struggles, crossing the border served as a safe refuge for civilians in both countries. Hundreds of thousands of people crossed the border as protracted wars terrorised civilians in both countries. Structural adjustment in the 1980s and 1990s led to the informalisation of these national economies as marginalised people sought out strategies to cope with the lack opportunities. Cross-border movement became

an economic strategy that formed in the wake of these policies. In the new millennium, political violence, and economic collapse in Zimbabwe has led to an increasing movement of Zimbabweans to Mozambique because of its proximity, ease of access, and the history of border movement. These historic events affected Zimbabwean migration and, therefore, the ways in which miners manage their relationships in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Labouring Colonies

Labour migration dates back to the colonial era in Manica. This trend was tightly bound up with the need to secure a steady supply of cheap labour to fuel the district's profitability. Therefore, organising labour remains a pervasive theme in southern African colonial history. The region has long been known for its mineral wealth with the British and Portuguese clashing over the region in the late 19th century (Allina-Pisano 2003:63). This was a distanced-form of European rule as the private ventures of the British South African Company and the Mozambique Company colonised these areas, and not the states of Britain and Portugal (Hughes 2006:20). To legally secure their lands, both companies staked hegemonic and cartographic claims over the hinterlands of their African colonies. Their feuding eventually sedimented into an official delineation between Portuguese East Africa and Rhodesia. Between 1897 and 1902, the border formed along the contours of what is now Zimbabwe's eastern highlands (Hughes 2006:4). This negotiated division of land split interlinked communities legally and cartographically. However, it did very little to impede their movement across the border.

In Portuguese East Africa, the Mozambique Company went through a lot of difficulty to recruit the labour they needed. To address these labour issues, the Portuguese implemented a feudal system, called the *prazo*, to entitle a class of Portuguese land-owners (Vail and White 1980:8). These landowners were then able to demand labour tributes from the indigenous populations living on the lands. This client-patron relationship between rural Mozambicans and the Portuguese came to define a history of forced labour extraction⁷. The Portuguese administration focused much of their efforts on retaining the men through these labour quotas (Hughes 2006:36). However, this programme was not very effective. Because of the *prazo* system, the Mozambique Company lacked control over recruitment (Allina-Pisano 2003:65). They did not have the resources to force people into these labour groups. Instead, they relied upon an agreement between them and the chiefs in order to regulate a steady supply of male labour (Allina-Pisano 2003:71). Characteristic of colonial rule in rural Mozambique, administrators had a difficult time organising African labour without the intervention of African intermediaries⁸ (cf. Hughes 2006). Therefore, indirect rule was an uneven process that relied on particular geographies. For these Mozambican men, the border presented itself as a means of opportunity and escape from the Portuguese labour gangs.

⁷ This was common practice among European colonisers as the Spanish introduced a similar system in Latin America (cf. Wolf 1982).

⁸ However, this system of labour extraction did not fail everywhere. For instance, in northern Mozambique, after taking over from the Nyassa Company, the Portuguese administration used local headmen, *autoridades gentílicas*, as their intermediaries to organise labour workgroups, and the population eventually came to accept this vertical hierarchy of labour relations as “traditional” rule (West 2005:101).

The labour arrangements of the Portuguese put black Mozambicans into harsh, low-paid working conditions. This coupled with weak indirect control pushed people, especially young men, to search for alternative livelihoods in surrounding states. Fidelis Duri writes, “[t]he labour traffic was virtually one-way as Mozambican Africans fled their country, which was characterised by gross colonial abuses and neglect” (2010:134). The almost universal participation of men in these labour migration routes frustrated the Companhia officials as they found it challenging to keep young men as forms of cheap labour (Lubkemann 2008:53). Men did not have a reason to stay and perform low-paid work for the Portuguese. The expectations of labourers changed as the colonial economies took shape. In Machaze province, Stephan Lubkemann (2008:67) suggests that the ability to save up for a *lobola* (bridewealth) spurred men into labour migration circuits. Hence, wage labour merged with socio-cultural obligations of men, which only added to the reasons for men to travel to more well-paid jobs in Zimbabwe. As mentioned later, this kind of life project continues within the life projects of men who seek out better opportunities to augment their ability to save for a *lobola*.

The Companhia had to also compete with the labour recruitment of the colonial administration in Rhodesia. Instead of focusing on mandatory labour tributes, the Rhodesian administration sought out labourers from the surrounding countries to fill their own labour shortages. It went—quite literally—to great lengths to secure labour for employers by signing agreements with Mozambique, Zambia, and Malawi to recruit labour for use primarily in wage labour positions on

the mines and farms, and in urban centres (Mlambo 2010:64-65). This paved the way for formal and organised labour migration in southern Africa. In particular, the agreement between the Rhodesian and Mozambican officials led to many Mozambicans outnumbering Zimbabweans in most workplaces in Mutare (Lubkemann 2010:135). In response, “the Companhia tried repeatedly to limit the activities of South African and Rhodesian recruiters—with only limited and intermittent success” (Hughes 2006:36). Furthermore, informal and independent labourers crossed the border in this region as well. Duri writes, “[i]n May 1933, the Mutare police noted that an increasing number of Mozambican informal work-seekers had entered the country through Penhalonga” (2010:134). These large numbers indicate that Rhodesian labour extraction was much more successful than the Mozambican labour recruitment project. Further, the movement across Penhalonga made it a historic route for informal migration into Zimbabwe.

In the first half of the 20th century, the large influx of foreign labour supported the expansion of the mining and commercial agricultural in Zimbabwe. Through these colonial logics, borders formed as passages to employment. Labour migration was established during this period as an industrialising Rhodesia required increasing numbers of wage labourers. This large movement of men marked the increasing popularity of cross-border movement in southern African to take advantage of differing political economic conditions. Through these migration routes, Zimbabwe emerged as an important destination within Mozambican livelihood strategies.

Independence Movement

Colonial rule was followed by a protracted period of independence struggles in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. During the wars in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, migrants-*cum*-refugees frequently used the borders as a means of escaping the violence. The routes were not exclusive to this particular period of upheaval. Rather, they reflected historic and social linkages that spanned this border. Lubkemann (2010:21) argues that refugees continually make decisions in these traumatic situations and strategise around their possibilities in relation to their goals and understandings. Therefore, refugees chose to move across the Zimbabwean-Mozambican border during warfare, likely because of prior experiences within formal and informal labour recruitment schemes.

Mozambican Independence

In 1974, after winning the war of independence with Portugal, the fledgling nation of Mozambique also required a large labour force. The prevailing party, the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO), implemented their villagisation initiative as a way to focus labour recruitment (Vail and White 1980:399). However, FRELIMO took a different approach from the colonial administration. By pronouncing the colonial chiefs and intermediaries as “obscurantists,” they circumvented their authority within these communities and proceeded to recruit labour directly from the population without the help of “traditional” authorities (Hughes 2006:43). This is in contrast to the colonial approach of indirect rule and, partly, was inspired by the failure of the Portuguese to recruit labour. Harry West contends that through villagisation, “FRELIMO

sought not only to free Mozambique from Portuguese rule, but also dramatically to transform Mozambican society and the operation of power within it” (2005:166). The government moved to centralise much of its power, while implementing new collectivised social and economic programmes (Pfeiffer 2004:362). The government unilaterally imposed a national social restructuring⁹. In the same stroke, FRELIMO also sought to modernise their economy and government services. In the late 1970s, FRELIMO expanded their health and education systems (Hanlon 2010:80). It invested heavily into these sectors as they were seen as ways of improving the country’s labour force. Villagisation was meant to make the administration more efficient and provide easy access to the labour force.

Zimbabwean Independence

During the same period of a newly independent Mozambique, the Zimbabwean independence struggle marked the exodus of thousands across to Mozambique. From 1975 to 1980, men and women fled Zimbabwe as military recruits or refugees (Duri 2010:136). Manica province proved a strategic destination for those wanting to escape the violence. The border again proved to be a strategic asset as crossing over had political and social implications. By the end of the independence struggle in Zimbabwe, 150,000 had fled across the border to Mozambique (Mlambo 2010:70). The substantial numbers of refugees moving across these borders demonstrates the ease of access to Mozambique’s

⁹ In the Marxist-Leninist model, development focused on peasants who, this case, interests were in removing colonial institutions, fairer pricing for their surplus goods and more social services (Simpson 1993:322). Prioritising peasants made sense as they constituted FRELIMO’s support base at the time.

borderlands for Zimbabweans. However, traffic was largely unidirectional. Because of the guerrilla attacks launched from Mozambique, the Rhodesian forces militarised and patrolled the border affecting the ability of Mozambican men to work on Zimbabwean plantations (Lubkemann 2008:129). The course of the war affected livelihood strategies on both sides of the border.

Civil War in Mozambique

After the independence of Mozambique, the Rhodesian government organised a group of former colonial military troops and other Mozambican exiles as a means of destabilising the new Mozambican government (Lubkemann 2008:137). The organisation evolved into *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (RENAMO), and this neighbourly meddling burgeoned into a long civil war between FRELIMO and RENAMO resulting in the death of more than a million people and the wide-spread displacement of Mozambicans. Hanlon writes, “[f]rom a mid-1980s population of 13–15 million, one million people died (seven per cent of the population) and five million were displaced or made refugees in neighbouring countries (one third of the population)” (2010:80). These large numbers reflect the length and brutality of this war. During this time, refugees considered cross-border strategies that used familiar routes into Zimbabwe. 140,000 Mozambicans were in camps and another 100,000 were unregistered refugees living in Zimbabwe (Mlambo 2010:72). Of the unregistered refugees, many of them ended up employed informally in the bordering areas of Nyanga, Mutare, Chipinge and Chimanmani (Duri 2010:137). Coupled with the repatriation of Zimbabwean refugees after their independence, hundreds of

thousands Mozambicans and Zimbabweans traversed across the mountainous border in the period of a decade.

Like the colonial labour migration seen in the colonial period, fleeing populations from Mozambique sought out old routes to, and workplaces in, Zimbabwe, but with different purposes. In Machaze, Lubkemann writes,

Throughout the mid-1980s, for many Machazian households the border between the countries became the crossroads for a furtive yet vigorous form of 'commuter migration' carried out by young men who found occasional work in Zimbabwe, yet who maintained continuous contact with mothers and younger siblings living on the Mozambican side of the border, who were scratching out a difficult but still largely self-reliant and independent existence based on subsistence agriculture. (2008:202)

This form of migration saw much more movement between their home communities as these men would return on a frequent basis. They used the border as a strategic asset to avoid the fighting, but remained close enough to still participate in their home lives.

After sixteen years of civil war, FRELIMO and the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) ended their civil war after a peace accord was reached in October of 1992. The lasting effects of displacement and villagisation significantly altered the social organisation of Mozambicans as many returned in the 1990s. Furthermore, during wartime periods of violence and political uncertainty, people crossed the Mozambican-Zimbabwean border as part of their livelihood strategies.

Structural Adjustment in Southern Africa

In the 1980s, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank pushed an agenda of structural adjustment. Infused with the ideological values of neo-

liberalism, these institutions forced indebted countries into accepting a prescribed structural adjustment programme (SAP) alongside loans. The SAP included short-term measures, such as a public sector wage freeze, reduced price subsidies, and currency devaluation, and longer-term ones like export promotion, economic liberalisation and the privatisation of state assets (Dixon et al. 1995:5). With many African states collecting loans during this period, these policies significantly eroded their public services and local industries at the expense of their peasantry and labour-class. These neoliberal policies became the cornerstone of foreign economic strategies imposed upon African countries.

Adjusting Mozambique

Structural adjustment came in at different points for Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Mozambique was still a new country and in the midst of an ongoing civil war when the government adopted the economic measures. On top of the violence, the war between FRELIMO and RENAMO bankrupted the new country. Mozambique was spending 40% of its national budget on the military during this period (Marshall 1992:5). The FRELIMO government had to contend with suppressing RENAMO, while also orchestrating and nurturing a national economy. In 1984, these pressures pushed Mozambique into bankruptcy and prompted its subsequent enrolment into the IMF and World Bank that same year (Marshall 1992:4). During the subsequent period, the post-independence social programmes were pulled back (Pfeiffer 2004:362). Dubbed the Economic Rehabilitation Programme in Mozambique, and backed by a Joaquim Chissano-

led FRELIMO¹⁰, this large-scale privatisation scheme benefited largely an elite class of Mozambicans (West 2005:183). Furthermore, this programme also served to marginalise rural communities and the working class. However, the erosion of the industrial base and civil services came in the midst of a civil war and was not fully realised until after the peace accord in 1992.

Adjusting in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, structural adjustment had a similar effect. The acceptance of a programme in 1990 promised an increase in wealth across the country. Instead, it exacerbated continuing problems of employment and access across the country's poorest populations. In the 1990s, structural adjustment began in Zimbabwe under the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme with the familiar prescriptions of reducing public expenditures, reducing budgets, and cuts to social and civil services (Zinyama 2000:72). However, accompanying these changes, structural adjustment allowed for unregulated products and competition to enter into Zimbabwe, thereby hurting local industries, and shifting people into informal economies (Pophiwa 1995:295). This led to a process of de-industrialisation because of the competition from imported goods, and massive inflation (Zinyama 2000:72). This forced many people out of secure livelihoods as prices rose to unaffordable levels for many people. Further, the main social consequences were the decline in formal employment, the further economic marginalisation of poor groups, and the cuts to education and health services (Tevera 1995:87-88). As seen in Mozambique, public healthcare and free public

¹⁰ The previous president, Samora Machel, was killed in 1986 when his plane crashed with evidence pointing to the involvement of the South African military (Hanlon 1991:33).

school education were once the hallmarks of a former socialist era (Zinyama 2000:73). Done away with under this adopted economic plan, the work force had their livelihood options substantially reduced. Zimbabweans needed to find alternate means of income in order to survive under these new conditions.

Adjusting to Informalisation

Structural adjustment led way to an increasing amount of informalisation in both countries. Because of the increasing lack of options, people resorted to precarious and often illicit forms of employment and income-generation.

Hammar, McGregor, and Landau remark, “[i]n Zimbabwe... structural adjustment in the 1990s marked the beginning of the process of the informalisation of everything” (2010:270). To add, Tevera (1995:86) observes that the most visible effects of structural adjustment was the expansion of the informal economy.

People adopted these practices because of a growing dissatisfaction and mistrust of formal institutions and arrangements. The informal economy included border-jumping as an opportunity to find other means of work. At this time, the border was considered to be porous, especially in places like the Penhalonga (Manicaland) and Nyaronga (Manica) crossing where communities on both sides continue to have close social and economic ties (Pophiwa 2010:294). Mentioned earlier, this particular crossing was also popular during the labour migration of young men into colonial Rhodesia. In 1990s, it was mostly Mozambicans crossing over to Zimbabwe to take advantage of the goods and services offered there (Pophiwa 2010:295). Mozambicans took advantage of healthcare and education in Zimbabwe even as structural adjustment altered these services.

Therefore, structural adjustment had uneven effects across the border, which migrants used to their advantage.

The rise in “smuggling” across this border is also a consequence of SAP reforms. Those living at the borders exploited economic opportunities on both sides. For example, in this period, a new market emerged as cross-border traders bought bundles of second-hand clothing¹¹ in Mozambique for resale back in Zimbabwe (Zinyama 2000:74). Buyers then sorted out the pieces of clothing for individual sale in Zimbabwe. This sort of informal entrepreneurship was a precarious practice because they risked encountering border guards each time they crossed. Traders also responded to other market demands on either side of the border, like smuggling sugar and mealie meal¹² (Pophiwa 2010:298). The fluctuating prices of goods in both countries allowed for people to make marginal profits from their movement back and forth. Trade routes took “market liberalisation” to heart as it was incorporated into strategic response by those most affected by structural adjustment.

The informal economy emerged as a feature of a structurally-adjusted Zimbabwe and Mozambique. “Free-market” policies and goods slowly eroded local enterprises taking away formal jobs and stable industries. Moving to the turn of the millennium, Mozambicans and Zimbabweans were already seemingly pushed to the brink. The “informalisation of everything”—mentioned by Hammar, McGregor and Landau—was in fact neo-liberalism at work in Africa.

A New Millennium

¹¹ These are often donations that have been bundled into bales and sold in bulk.

¹² Corn flour used to make the regional staple food, *sadza*.

Mozambican Growth?

At the turn of the millennium, the border remained as vital as ever for livelihood strategies. Mozambique continued on a path of structural adjustment. These sorts of neo-liberal policies became the norm in the government. Joseph Hanlon (2010:70) goes as far as calling Mozambique a “donor darling” for its apparent willingness to adopt any and all foreign economic policies. During the 1990s, most donors gave aid on a conditional basis, giving them the power to dictate Mozambique’s economic policy and experiment with the harshest structural adjustment policies (Hanlon 2010:86). On paper, it seemed to work as the gross national product (GDP) grew at six to seven percent per year for a decade. To add to this “economic miracle”, the government claimed that the number of people living below the poverty line decreased dramatically from 69 per cent in 1997 to 54 per cent in 2003 (Hanlon 2010:90). These are the kinds of statistics that international donors relished.

The numbers, however, did not reflect the realities on the ground. The social and economic problems prevalent during and after the war were never addressed. Furthermore, contrary to government reports, the disparity between the upper and lower classes was actually increasing rapidly. The income of the poor fell between 2002 and 2005 with mean income rising 18 percent, but median income falling by three percent (Hanlon 2010:91). These are the relative indicators that show that the concentration of wealth moved to a small group of people, while the wages of the majority of people fell. Further, there was little work done to alleviate poverty, especially in rural areas. Hanlon (2010:89)

complains that there was no domestic investment or job creation, and no loans were available for the rural economy, while little technical help, a lack of services, and no research contributed to its stagnation. Neither the government nor international donors paid any attention to the worsening social conditions across the country. All they did was point to the economic statistics as neo-liberalism continued to fail the majority of Mozambicans.

Zimbabwean Crises

In Zimbabwe, the new millennium was marked by political violence and economic catastrophe. The rise of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999 as a viable opposition to the ruling ZANU(PF) party was supposed to usher in a new balance of power in the Zimbabwean government (McGregor 2010:7). Their quick rise signalled the growing displeasure with the ZANU(PF) government in Zimbabwe. To address this power shift, ZANU(PF) turned to wartime narratives and political violence as solutions to contain the MDC challenge. In response to the MDC popularity, ZANU(PF) officially dubbed this new era, "the Third Chimurenga"¹³ as ZANU(PF) reworked nationalistic narratives to focus on race, while labelling democracy and rights as imperial goals (Alexander 2006:185). On the ground, political terror was used to silence opposition voices. In 2002, by-elections, council elections, and the presidential elections were marked by political violence and vote-rigging (Alexander 2006:187). The blatant disregard for peaceful and fair electioneering tainted ZANU(PF)'s hold over Zimbabwe. In this period, the government invoked a

¹³ The First Chimurenga was the 1896-1897 uprisings and the Second Chimurenga was the guerrilla war of the 1970s (Ranger 2004:219).

wartime discourse, politicised the land occupations and violence against white farmers and farm workers, and terrorised MDC activists, teachers, unionists, journalists and civic leaders (McGregor 2010:7). The rhetoric of the Third Chimurenga deflected attention away from the intimidation and violence carried out by the ZANU(PF) government, and re-cast them as patriotic and anti-imperialist.

To address racial inequalities, land redistribution became a central issue during this period. The government initiated a radical policy called the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), and, through it, displaced thousands of white commercial farming families and hundreds of thousands black farm worker households (Hammar et al. 2010:272). The economic outcomes of fast-track resettlement were severe and the rural landscape changed dramatically. In the 1990s, 4,500 mostly white-owned commercial farms existed with more than 300,000 farm workers; in contrast, after five years of fast-track resettlement about 500 farms remained and 200,000 workers had lost their jobs and the access to homes and services (Alexander 2006:191). Resettlement affected both white and black families living on those commercial farms. The political point was clear that racial lines evoked strong feelings that had not yet healed since independence. However, these policies also re-arranged the composition of power on these farms, as many black beneficiaries emerged from this programme. Hammar, McGregor and Landau are quick to note,

It is important to remember that land transfers, or 'replacements' overlay the losses. This means not only acknowledging the displaced farmers and farmworkers, but also the new settlers: the

140,775 smallholders and 16,386 black commercial farmers.
(2010:273)

This was a radical economic and racial re-configuration of Zimbabwe's countryside. In the process of these land transfers, ZANU(PF) politicking led to the fall of an already precarious Zimbabwean economy weakened from the structural adjustment in the 1990s. Alexander (2006:193) observes that the FLTRP and Third Chimurenga together led to the record collapse of the economy, food shortages, plummeting industrial output, high levels of unemployment, soaring inflation, shortages of currency and fuel, and to millions of Zimbabweans leaving the country to seek new opportunities and livelihoods. Through their manoeuvring to remain in government, ZANU(PF) instigated an economic crisis that it could not later bring under control. Alexander points out, "amidst an 'uprising' ostensibly designed to address the inequitable distribution of resources of the past, most Zimbabweans, including many who were recipients of land, were left considerably worse off than they had been prior to the Third Chimurenga" (2006:193). The Zimbabwean public bore the brunt of these high-stakes gambles made by government officials.

Even in light of a national economic collapse, the ZANU(PF) government continued to push the country into further crisis. To add to the economic turmoil, Operation Murambatsvina was launched in 2005 to remove all forms of informal jobs and settlements in urban areas with 700,000 losing their livelihoods and homes (Potts 2010:100). In practice, this assault mainly targeted the poorest populations already living at the margins. It also further displaced and terrorised them. To worsen the situation, the government used emergency measures to

manipulate a fragile and battered economy. Operation Dzikisa Mutenga was implemented in 2007 to place controls on the spiralling costs of basic goods, but it only managed to force shops to close down and others to stop stocking their shelves, and only really served to increase the price of staples in the black market (Hammar et al. 2010:270). To further Zimbabwe's economic failure, in 2008, Zimbabwe's Reserve Bank's mass printing of money triggered a hyperinflationary crisis (Mawowa and Matongo 2010:320). A formal sector salary became worthless as the cost for basic goods skyrocketed above basic wages. Actions by the government created a situation where people could barely get by. This direct and structural violence again pushed people already affected by war, structural adjustment, and the collapsing economy away from their already precarious livelihoods, and forced them into the margins and beyond.

Cross-border Strategies

Many used historic routes and sought out opportunities across the border. Of the migrants who crossed into Mozambique, many lost their jobs in the industrial collapse since 2000. Zimbabweans arriving later were further impacted by Operation Murambatsvina. Many civil servants and formal sector workers also left their jobs to join this exodus during the hyperinflationary crisis (Duri 2010:150). As seen in the 1990s, many adopted border-crossing as a solution in times of political and economic uncertainty. Informal economies and livelihoods on the borders remained viable options as many sought out ways to cope with the unstable formal economy. After Operation Murambatsvina, basic goods became worth more for sale in Mozambique, encouraging "smugglers" to bring

them over the border to sell (Duri 2010:143). This only added to the shortages in Zimbabwean shops as people could earn more from the sale of the goods by crossing in Mozambique. Eventually, smuggling became targets of political control and suppression. In 2005, the state militarised the border and scapegoated smugglers who sold food supplies in Mozambique for maize shortages in Zimbabwe (Pophiwa 2010:300). By blaming smugglers, the state deflected questions of an ongoing agricultural production shortage on to an unorganised informal sector. Informal cross-border trade was suddenly under close scrutiny for a period of time. However, this did not permanently deter cross-border movement and economies, which remain established.

Diamond Mining in Chiadzwa

The discovery of the Marange diamond fields in 2008 triggered an artisanal diamond mining boom. Because of the failing economy and the promise of a large pay-off, the diamond fields attracted a struggling working class and foreign buyers to Chiadzwa (Duri 2010:191). However, this also captured the attention the ZANU(PF) elites who used the military brigades to secure the informal profits (Hammar et al. 2010:277, Martin and Bernard 2010)¹⁴. During its expansion, reports of human rights abuses surfaced. Alan Martin and Bernard Taylor write, “late 2008 and early 2009 marked the most repressive period in Chiadzwa, stories of rape, beatings and summary executions continue to be reported to human rights groups on a weekly basis” (2010:18). The military

¹⁴ These events unfolded at the same time as the ZANU(PF) and the two MDC factions reached a governance agreement, the Global Political Agreement, and subsequently formed the Government of National Unity (Hammar et al. 2010:264-265). Martin and Bernard (2010:2) suggest that ZANU(PF) elites used the diamond money to jockey for power within the party and to destabilise the current government.

brutality exacted on miners reflects the amount of state oversight in this area. Marange has the potential to single-handedly change the economic future of Zimbabwe, which is especially influential given Zimbabwe's economic . Furthermore, in a failing economy, artisanal diamond mining opened up opportunities for many people who could not survive under the current political economic conditions to become miners and smugglers. Diamonds were smuggled into Mozambique as artisanal mining boomed in Chiadzwa (Duri 2010:145). This affected border towns, such as Vila de Manica where stories of open-displays of diamond trafficking and wealth still circulate. In 2011, the Kimberly Process lifted the allowed Zimbabwe to resume the trade of its diamonds (BBC 2011). This pushed many of the artisanal miners out of the area as access was sold off to foreign firms. Accustomed to higher earnings, miners sought out alternative and similar practices to compensate. Many turned to artisanal gold mining along the Zimbabwean-Mozambican border as another chance to apply their skills and earn a substantial income.

The Expansion of Artisanal Gold Mining in Manica

As a bordering region, Manica is at the centre of much of the artisanal mining activity. With the current shortages of work opportunities, labour migrants flocked to Manica's hills in search of new incomes and new possibilities to extend their livelihoods. Thus, artisanal gold mining sites boomed in recent times as miners sought out opportunities in Manica. Many of the known sites were close to the Zimbabwean border with the greatest concentration north-west of Vila de Manica (near Nyaronga) and in the Chimanimani mountains (Dondeyne et al.

2009:47). This concentrated activity would have likely involved Zimbabweans who frequent these routes. Near Fenda, Munhena and Makoromadze were established for longer periods of time. At those sites, artisanal gold miners engage in reef mining¹⁵. Given the presence of artisanal gold mining activity in the area, it is no surprise Fenda was founded in the same valley. Discovered in 2009, Fenda was named after the miner who discovered the alluvial gold deposits underneath the valley floor. From this point, it expanded quickly as the area saw a large intake of Zimbabwean and Mozambican migrants. In 2010, over a thousand miners worked in the fields as word of the gold wealth spread. This also came at a similar period when the informal access to the nearby Marange diamond fields started to decline. Miners were likely attracted to the rumours of large gold finds and minimal government intervention. However, in the following year, rumours of exhausted resources and the allure of other mining possibilities have led to an equally quick decline of mining activity. Understood through a wider process of informalisation, the boom-and-bust trend in Fenda reflects the precariousness of a gold-centred economy as it impacts miners and local livelihoods. As seen in Fenda, informal economies provide small pockets of opportunity, but do not, as a rule, provide security.

Through the Looking Glass

In the history of Mozambique and Zimbabwe, movement across their shared border is a recurring historical feature. Labour was the primary concern of colonial administrations as they competed to secure the abundant natural resources in southern Africa. These labour arrangements formed into socially

¹⁵ Hard-rock mining

and culturally important migrations for young Mozambican men. Particularly brutal working conditions coupled with indirect management led to many male labourers to leave for Zimbabwe and South Africa. Shifting into an era of independence, fighting spread into rural areas and civilians had to choose with whether to flee across the border or to stay put. Over this period, hundreds of thousands of refugees moved across the border. After independence settled, structural adjustment programmes further weakened the economies in these newly-formed nation-states as they eroded protections for domestic growth. Under the weight of these policies, informalisation emerged as people looked for alternative livelihoods to cope with their weakened domestic economies. Informal economies burgeoned exactly because of the limitations placed on formal working conditions. In the new millennium, ZANU(PF) struggled to re-assert its primacy in government and sacrificed the welfare of Zimbabweans in the process. On top of the political violence of this period, the Third Chimurenga, Operation Murambatsvina, Operation Dzikisa Mutenga, and hyperinflation took away most of the jobs, displaced the majority of Zimbabweans, and generally made it difficult to hold onto a basis for livelihood. While in Mozambique, despite statistics displaying high national growth, Mozambicans workers did not experience any benefits in this period. They continue to struggle within the economic precariousness of neoliberal policies. Thus, people sought out other means of getting by through participating in informal economies and border-jumping. Once again, Zimbabweans and Mozambicans have used the border as means of survival during these recurring periods of social hardship. Popphiwa

concludes, “the very existence of the border thus provides people with the opportunity to make a living through circumventing it” (2010:302). Through the movement of labour migrants, refugees, smugglers, traders, and miners, the history of this border is better understood as a means of opportunity rather than of restriction. Mozambicans and Zimbabweans depend on differential political economic conditions on both sides.

The political and economic uncertainty continues to shape the contours of political ecologies found in Fenda. In this respect, people have not been complacent as they continue enter into informal economies to address the lack of formal opportunities. This history shapes the narratives of miners who have experienced the effects of these processes. As a result, Zimbabweans find ways to articulate their continuing social lives in Zimbabwe with their activities over-the-border. Therefore, miners make decisions move into these ecological roles due to their relationships with particular places, not in spite of them.

Chapter 3: Narrating Mining Practices

Coming from a diversity of backgrounds, miners in Fenda have complex personal histories and social relations that affect their decision to work in artisanal gold mining. With both Mozambican and Zimbabwean miners migrating there to work, I focus on Zimbabwean migrants who have come in search of alternative livelihoods in the wake of political and economic uncertainty in Zimbabwe. As mentioned in Chapter Two, neoliberal structural adjustments and political violence brought wide-reaching changes that led to an informalisation of the national economy. As a consequence, Zimbabweans looked increasingly across the border as a chance to extend and reconfigure their livelihoods. Therefore, I use this chapter to capture those processes at an individual level through invoking the narratives of miners. The narratives of Zimbabwean migrants reflected on their experiences within these wider political economic structures. Furthermore, I also use their narratives to explain their attachment to mining practices and to ground their ecological understandings.

Academics have used the discourse of displacement to explain the movement of Zimbabweans away from their homes at such a large-scale.

Hammar, McGregor and Landau write,

Displacement is undeniably destructive and traumatic in multiple ways, but these processes also have beneficiaries, and have created new configurations and practices of power and accumulation. This has reshaped modes of governing and generated new economic logics, interests and relationships that can then act to prevent stabilisation, return, and settlement. Displacement has also stimulated often unexpected and inventive strategies for survival, adaptation and prosperity. (2010:267)

In their estimation, the process of displacement involves the agency of the displaced to adjust to their changing of material and social circumstances. They may also do this in ways which alter a return to “normal” livelihoods. Normality holds little promise in circumstances where people are barely getting by. Rather, people alter their life projects to accommodate these new strategies rather than separating them as necessities. In Fenda, displacement also indicates the reconfiguration of political ecologies. Zimbabweans have found ways to negotiate access to the gold mining fields, moving across borders, and into new labour and social roles. As Zimbabweans are on the move, so are the ways that they imagine and interact with their current and previous homes.

Following the decline of the Zimbabwean economy, workers have found it difficult to find secure jobs. Rather, the adoption of a neoliberal structural adjustments and political violence redefined the availability of wage labour. Therefore, the informalisation of the Zimbabwean economy transitioned people into more precarious work arrangements. Within these livelihood conditions, people rely on short-term work contracts and quick transactions, which has therefore altered the social relationships between people. Jeremy Jones (2010) suggests that many Zimbabweans have adopted a new work ethic called *kukiya-kiya*. Jones describes the growth of *kukiya-kiya* in recent times as “the emergence of a generalised culture of evasion: evasion of social institutions like the state, the bureaucracy, and the law; and evasion of cultural norms and hierarchies” (2010:287). Current Zimbabweans’ approaches to livelihoods and social practices reflect an understanding of necessity in their actions. *Kukiya-kiya*

gives them a way to frame informalisation and contain it. It guides Zimbabweans as they engage in new livelihood activities.

As informalisation forces Zimbabweans to move across borders, their movements also politically redefine the contours of the Zimbabwean economy. Through their informal practices, Zimbabweans link neighbouring geographies into Zimbabwe's national economy, and redefine its contours through their continuing material and non-material exchanges. Further, the informalisation of the Zimbabwean economy has also shifted Zimbabwean's imagined life projects to incorporate these livelihoods *outside* of Zimbabwe. Anna Tsing writes, "[p]rojects that make us imagine locality, or the space of regions or nations, in order to see their success are... scale-making projects" (2005:57).

In this sense, the displacement of Zimbabweans is not just a dramatic reshaping of the economy, but also a decisive personal response to the political and economic structures as they seek new ways to re-imagine their life projects *within* Zimbabwe. Thus, border-jumping invokes a national scale as migrants transition into another country. There is a change in status and social roles not just as Zimbabweans cross, but, more importantly, when they re-imagine their social roles. However, migrants' attachment to Zimbabwe through their exchanges and within their life projects indicates that they have not fully left.

In this chapter, I assess the personal narratives of miners. I recall my discussion with the miner I spoke to first, Spencer. His situation provided a starting point for my field research, and I am therefore using it as a good place to also start this chapter. The subsequent section discusses their lives in Zimbabwe

and their personal histories. This is meant to provide a sense of who the *gwejas* are apart from their work as miners. I then focus on border-jumping as a common method of crossing the border. This is a widely shared experience amongst Zimbabweans who migrate to Mozambique. I discuss the mining practices of the artisanal gold miners in Fenda. The purpose is to represent the daily working conditions. Finally, I discuss miners' understanding of the environment in Fenda. Environmental and economic changes are closely linked to circulating perceptions of Fenda, and to how miners imagine their livelihoods. Overall, I use this chapter as a way of linking the details of personal histories to more large-scale trends.

Finding Fenda

I travelled daily from Vila de Manica market on local transport up to Fenda. On my first day, the flatbed truck was filled to capacity. People squeezed along the edges of the back, while others hung off the side of the truck. I stood upright on the back with my arms wrapped around a fellow passenger as each bump in the road threw off my balance. Reaching the turn-off to Fenda, I got out and paid the fifteen *meticaïs*¹⁶ fare. In the dry midday heat, I walked alone down a dirt road towards the market area. Along the road, a field appeared with dozens of miners working above deep pits. Clumped closely together, the mines extended down ten metres and into networks of tunnels. I wandered between these mines and observed the miners at work.

Eventually, a Zimbabwean miner spoke to me in English. His name was Spencer and worked there with his partner, Givemo. Givemo was down below

¹⁶ At the time of research, approximately one Canadian dollar equalled 26 Mozambican *meticaïs*

and tasked with digging out the mine. After he filled the loose earth into a burlap sack, Spencer used a winch to wheel it out of the mine and emptied it into a mound beside him. We chatted as we waited for Givemo to complete each bag.

Over the course of the extraction process, miners assume most of the risk, both financially and physically. Since they paid the *machamba*, land owner, a fee of 300 meticaís, Spencer and Givemo have rights over the gold from the mine. Opening a new mine is a physically gruelling task that lasts for three or four days until they reach the gold belt several metres below. In some cases, like in this field, miners rent water pumps because the mines go below the water table. This results in constant flooding making these mines precarious places. The water soaks into the surrounding earth, increasing its weight, and therefore harming the structural integrity of the mine. If the mine collapsed, Spencer and Givemo would have to begin the process all over again.

After the completion of the mine shaft, Spencer and Givemo will allow other miners to dig lateral tunnels. Spencer explained that they will have to control the other miners. There is a real danger of them digging haphazardly and damaging the integrity of the mine. When they find gold, half of the profits will go to the field owner who is also the principal gold buyer in the area. The owner and his buyers sit at the edge of clearing in cars waiting for miners to come after each find and sell them the gold. Working in this particular field, Spencer and Givemo are obligated to split their profits with the land owner. The rest is split evenly among Spencer and Givemo, and mining syndicates who choose to work in this mine.

From Harare, Spencer was a skilled electrician who found it difficult in recent times to work for decent wages in Zimbabwe. He came to Fenda because mining offered an opportunity to earn more money. Spending most of 2010 there, he earned \$2000 USD supplementing his family income which was a substantial amount more than what he could have earned in Harare. His family also owns an A1 farm as beneficiaries from the fast-track land reform programme. Therefore, while Spencer is away in Fenda, his wife and children tend to the farm. However, these are meagre earnings and cannot sustain an entire family. Therefore, Spencer arrived in the dry season when the mining was safer and there was less farm work at home, and planned to return home during the wet season. His livelihood strategy revolved around accommodating the seasonal conditions in Fenda and Harare.

Spencer's story reflects the working conditions, economic decisions, and social lives of many Zimbabwean miners. By splitting his time between both countries, Spencer takes advantage of different political and economic conditions in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. His story demonstrates the effect displacement has had on his life. Through informal practices, he connects his Zimbabwean life with his work in Fenda.

Past Histories

The displacement of many Zimbabweans into Manica in recent times relates intimately with their historic attachment to the border regions of Mozambique. They have relied on coming here during times of war and ambiguity. In his ethnography on the Mozambican civil war, Stephen Lubkemann

writes, "war-time movement reflected the complex ways in which warscape inhabitants sought to realize culturally imagined life projects and negotiate the meaning and configuration of social relations as socially positioned and differentiated actors" (2008:21). I extend this notion beyond just wartime circumstances to refer to a more generalised daily struggle in contemporary Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Current livelihood strategies are ways of achieving envisioned life goals, when the previous ways of accessing them have been closed off. Therefore, I use the personal histories of miners to show how their imagined trajectories link their lives in both Fenda and Zimbabwe. Miners continue to make decisions and restructure life projects in ongoing political and economic uncertainty. Because they make decisions to work in Fenda, miners place themselves in new social, economic, and ecological roles.

I met my main study participant, Eric, one day as I observed miners panning for gold in the river. I sat on the banks and watched as dozens of miners washed the earth away and sifted through their pans. Most people mistook me for a gold buyer who, too, would sit in shady areas along the river banks. However, Eric believed me when I told him about my research. He took an interest in my work and began to inquire more about the details. Our friendship built up over a period of weeks. Over time, he increasingly shared more about his life history.

Myself, I'm from Mount Darwin. That's where my home rural area is. In town, long before my father was a policeman in Harare, he stayed there with my mother before I was born. He decided to buy a house in Mutare. The relatives of my mother stay in Mutare. That's why my father bought a property there. In Zimbabwe, I have two brothers. One lives with my mother in Manica Bridge. If I leave

for Zimbabwe on the weekends, I go to see them. I didn't see them the last time I was there, but I hope I will see them when I go [next]. I don't want to stay in Mozambique. I just want to go to Zimbabwe.

Eric's family is one of the reasons that he stayed so near to Zimbabwe.

Frequently returning to Zimbabwe to visit them, he continued to maintain close ties with them. He found work in Fenda, but acknowledged that this was just a temporary arrangement. With his savings, he planned to attend teacher's college and become a high school history teacher. Mining was just one way he found to link his current situation to his future goals.

Artisanal gold mining is a part of the growing informal sector. With its high rewards, many are attracted to the industry, especially as some areas already involved within other informal practices. Furthermore, some miners already worked in the informal sector in various forms before working in Zimbabwe. Eric told me,

I heard that there was a lot of gold here at Fenda [from] my friend Alan who was living there. When I was in Zimbabwe, I was selling juice cards¹⁷, so from there I decided to go to Mozambique.

Eric used to sell juice cards on street to people who would pass by. This kind of work is low-paid and does not involve wages. From what I understand, they earn a small fee for each juice card sold. Therefore, his decision to move shifted him from one informal practice to another. Having a friend in Fenda made the transition easier for Eric. This provided him some security when he decided to move. From Eric's experience, I attribute the continued growth of gold mining in

¹⁷ Juice cards are pre-paid credits used to top up cell phone accounts. Vendors often sit at street corners and attempt to sell the cards to people as they pass by.

this area to these word-of-mouth exchanges as miners move between home and the field. The rumours of gold wealth attract many Zimbabweans to Fenda.

The rumours, however, may only be partially true. Mining earnings can exceed wages found in other short-term seasonal work, but rarely does it produce the same spectacular finds as rumoured in the Marange diamond fields. Many Fenda miners previously worked in Marange. There were concentrated amounts of artisanal mining in the area since its discovery in 2006 (Martin and Taylor 2010:4). The economic failure coupled with the promise of instant riches attracted would-be miners into these fields. However, violent abuses by the military and the securitisation of the entire area have forced many miners to look for alternative work. Some found gold mining as that alternative. Duncan is a trained accountant working previously for private firm, while Simba worked in a health care clinic. After the Zimbabwean economy collapsed in the last decade, they both moved into artisanal gold mining at Kwekwe. However, in Zimbabwe, artisanal mining is much more closely policed. Miners could not gain access to mining sites without going through formal permit systems. This may have restricted many miners who could not pay the fees. Further, the punishments for illegal mining are much more severe than in Mozambique. Frequent raids and the threat of imprisonment are always a concern. In both cases, the low obligations and fast-money appeals to many miners seeking to augment their livelihoods.

Eric points to the lack of opportunities in Zimbabwe to earn money as the reason for leaving. The continuing effects of economic policies and political

uncertainty left him without any chances to work, in either the formal or informal sectors.

In Zimbabwe, it's not so easy to get money every day. If you [work for] a big business you can get \$10 [a day]. There are no areas like here in Mozambique. Here you can do what you want. In Zimbabwe, there's no employment due to political [in]stability, so it's not easy. If I [stop working here and] go back, I will come [to Mozambique to] buy shoes and sell them back in Zimbabwe.

Most likely, he will smuggle his shoes across the border to sell them in informal markets. Eric's plan demonstrates his attachment to the informal practices. This reflects a re-orientation of Eric's expectations and planning towards the current political and economic structures in Zimbabwe.

I met Tanaka during one of my daily strolls through the market area. His syndicate were resting, as so many of them do during the heat of the day. Since this was my first formal interview, I began with a focus on his reasons for coming to Fenda. Tanaka explained to me,

We are not rich. Most people spend their money on food. You are looking at [earning] two points per week now, maybe less, or even nothing. In Zimbabwe, there is employment, but the salaries are low. Mostly if you go into panning you can get more [money] in a year. If you compare what you get per annum in mining and when you are working, mostly what you get in mining is far better. Even if you're not lucky in Manica, you're better off here than in Zimbabwe. At the moment things are tight, but I'd rather get \$200 per month. Last year it was ok. But now I don't want to lie to you, we're working hand to mouth [in Fenda]. What about the people who are waiting for [me]. Some of us have families waiting for money for rent and for food.

Tanaka's perspective reflects the desperation in many of the miners' activities.

Their economic gains are much greater here. Further, it is not just their lives that hinge on their success, but also their livelihoods of their family members who depend on remittances.

Education remains a part of many Zimbabwean miners' life projects. Eric did not spend much of his money, as he worked diligently to save for a return to school.

I saved my money on my own. I don't want to be helped by someone. It is difficult in Africa, if your brother helps you in terms of education, you will have quarrels. I need to work hard to achieve my goals and ambitions. [I] just want to do my own things. That's why you see me working alone most of the time. I hope next year I will go to college. I don't want to ask for help from someone. The money I have now I have to save. Today I [will] get two points¹⁸, and tomorrow two points. It will increase every day. If I go to Zimbabwe at the end of the month, I just want to start my own business. I want to increase the money in my accounts, so that in 2012, I will go to school. Because my mother is now a widow, I don't want to ask [for] money from her because she doesn't work. She depends on the rent that she gets from the house my father bought.

Like Spencer, Eric bridges his life projects by living between Fenda and Zimbabwe. The money he saves from mining will fund his education in the future. Even though, his family has some resources available, earning the money himself for his college education will satisfy his life goals without imposing on his mother or siblings. Many Zimbabweans are unable to access post-secondary education after graduation. Mostly, they cannot meet the tuition fees required. Grant approached me one afternoon as I was walking through the market. He asked me to help him find a foreign sponsor to fund his education. He wanted desperately to go to university, but he stopped short of going because of the early death of his father.

I'm from Chitungwe and I'm 27. I did my ordinary levels. I studied seven subjects: geography, math, science, Shona, English, economics, and accounting. In South Africa, I was trained in [construction]. My father trained me then he died. I went back to

¹⁸ One point refers to one-tenth of a gram.

Zimbabwe. I heard about gold and I came [to Mozambique]. A guy brought me here and taught me everything. I worked in three different places, but now I'm working here. The most expensive thing I want is to further my education. I paid for two of my siblings' education, and I have to take care of my wife and son as well.

His life project revolves increasing his education, a strong value that his father instilled in him. He confessed to me that he is ready to sacrifice a lot in order to meet this life goal. So far, with his earnings, he has been able to fulfill other life goals, such as supporting his family.

Other miners have different life trajectories. Some worked within formal sectors hit hard by the economic crisis. Lucky is from the neighbouring Zimbabwean province of Manicaland. His life had a different path before working in the formal sector as a mechanic. The collapse of the economy brought him over to Fenda, but only temporarily. Lucky explained,

In my own thinking, I think [that I will] leave this area. Because I am a motor mechanic, I want to go home and start my own business. So the money I am looking for [will] build my business. Maybe if I get 500 dollars, it will be much better. So far, I saved up 120 [dollars], which I [have] put aside. We are eight in my family. All of them are still working in Zimbabwe. Some live in Harare, some in other states, and in Mutare. I'm the only one who came here. I send money to them if I have any. Some of my sisters [send] me money here in Mozambique because they know that it is hard. [My] family members are suffering, so we just help each other. Also my father is still working part-time. He is at home making some vehicles and repairing [others].

Lucky has trained in a technical trade, like Spencer, but has not been able to find work in Zimbabwe. Hence, he decided to build up the money for his business through mining. However, Lucky cannot save enough money at times, so his family gives him money occasionally to pay for his expenses as he tries to save money. Lucky's story reflects the volatility of working in the informal sector. He

also requires additional funds to support his living in Mozambique. He spends much of his earnings on rent, food, and mining supplies. When he does have some savings, he invests in his life projects by sending money home to his family or by saving up to start his own business.

Miners who come to Fenda have a temporary stay in mind. By mining in Fenda, they continue to extend their livelihood options as they search for ways to meet their life projects. Because of their proximity to the border, Zimbabweans continue to participate in home life by sending remittances, calling their relatives, and returning occasionally. In this sense, their livelihoods in Fenda remain intimately linked to their lives at home.

Border-jumping Between Zimbabwe and Mozambique

Border-jumping is a popular and *normalised* means of crossing between the two countries. As I carried out my research, I wanted to know more about the routes Zimbabwean miners took to Fenda. Typically, when I asked Zimbabweans how they got to Fenda, they would look or point westwards at the mountains and tell me Zimbabwe is not far, rather it is just over the mountains in the distance. They took comfort in the fact that they could see the border from where they worked. In Eric's case, his mother and brother live incredibly close to him in Fenda. He can frequent his home while living on this side of Mozambique. To border-jump, James takes a van that plies the route between Fenda and Nyaronga along the border. Vans are also frequently seen on the main road running towards Vila de Manica. Such is the amount of border-jumping traffic. From Nyaronga, Eric crosses over the mountains on foot all the way home. On

the other side, Eric visits his family and also uses the banks to deposit his money. Therefore, he continues to honour his social obligations and operate within Zimbabwe.

Border-jumping is not a new occurrence in this area. There has been movement across this land since before colonial administrations demarcated the space between Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa. This movement created historic routes which people used to extend their livelihood strategies. In chapter two, the informal Penhalonga-Nyaronga border crossing was used by young male labour migrants to access wage labour positions in Zimbabwe, and by traders who catered to markets on both sides after structural adjustment. Now, Zimbabwean miners cross it frequently to move between Fenda and home.

Border-jumping also indicates the changing structure of this particular political economy. Their movement across the border links the gold economy in Fenda to the Zimbabwean national economy. This form of scale-making redefines the discursive limits of Zimbabwean economic activity to include miners' informal practices in Fenda.

Many miners come to Fenda experienced in crossing into other neighbouring countries. Zimbabweans have been subject to deteriorating economic conditions since the implementation of structural adjustment in the 1990s. Therefore, many older miners have gone through several other livelihoods before arriving in Fenda. For example, Zabrohy has border-jumped numerous times before.

It's not my first time [border-jumping]. I have done it several times in South Africa, Botswana, and Zambia. I'm used to border-jumping.

It's easy for Mozambique. People come to buy bundles of clothes. Because it's not allowed to bring them over, they just cross the border without passports. I know everything. If things don't go well in a situation, you need to sacrifice. Sometimes, [the police] arrest you, but you just bribe them. When I first came, it was with seven guys, now I go alone.

With past experience, Zabrohy is not fearful of the consequences of border-jumping. Once people find these routes, it becomes an easier task to move back and forth between the countries. Like Zabrohy, experienced border-jumpers who come into contact with authorities use bribes to ease their passage through.

Simba, another experienced border-jumper, does not have the appropriate documents, yet he moves confidently through the official border at Machipanda.

There is a civil border [Machipanda] behind that mountain with Mozambican officials and Zimbabwean officials. When you arrive there, you pay them. I told them that I am Mozambican and that I lived in Zimbabwe, but I grew up here. There's no problem with the [official]. Security officers don't like documents, just money.

From the experience of Zimbabweans that I interviewed, many put little faith in the guards doing little else than taking bribes. This cynicism points to the tacit acceptance of border-jumping. At the right price, Mozambicans and Zimbabweans can move openly through the border posts. Border-jumpers also point to an initial hesitation with crossing the border. Subsequent trips across are much more secure because people recognise the intent of border guards is not to prevent border crossing, but to secure bribes. This is not always the case as the border on occasion comes under close scrutiny. Noted earlier, this occurred in 2005 when the "smugglers" were blamed for the maize shortages in Zimbabwe.

I also met a Zimbabwean miner, Grant, who did not border-jump to get to Mozambique. He scoffed when I asked if he border-jumped. Instead, he used his passport to cross into Mozambique. However, this is also met with difficulties.

I have a passport, but if I [leave] Mozambique I have to pay a fine on the border of around 1000 meticaïs [for overstaying]. If I go through the mountains, I'm afraid they'll ask me about the stamps in South Africa. I'm not sure if they care. If they don't ask, I can go right now.

However, Grant finds himself in a similar situation as other Zimbabweans even with a passport. He has overstayed his time in Mozambique by a few years. Essentially, this transition in status constitutes a form of border-jumping. Grant used legal and formal means of travelling to Mozambique, but continues to stay and, therefore, avoids the authorities.

More closely, border-jumping indicates the acquisition of an illegal or undocumented status in Mozambique. Their status leaves them prone to imprisonment and deportation. However, this only seems to be enforced in areas outside of the mining fields. Therefore, many Zimbabweans opt to stay in Fenda. Surprisingly, Duncan approached me one day and asked to be interviewed. Over time, Duncan, like many others, began to show appreciation and interest in my research project. In Duncan's case, his border-jumping has made him fearful of authorities in Mozambique.

I came through border-jumping. This was the first time. I felt like I might get caught, but when I came it was easy. When we got to Manica, I felt like I was going to be caught, so I don't go there [Vila de Manica] even when people invite me.

Not having the correct papers forces many to avoid town or police in those areas. In town, police patrols are much more likely to check for a person's documents

and demand bribes from Zimbabweans. However, the police are fully aware of the presence of Zimbabweans in Fenda and allow them to operate there freely. Curiously, the site operates without the much interference from the police. I suspect that the land owners have the blessing of the regional chief to continue mining and the police stay away to respect this authority.

Whatever the means, Zimbabweans have been crossing over with increasing ease and frequency. In terms of their livelihood strategies, border-jumping is an essential part of their mining practices. It links their work in Fenda to their lives back in Zimbabwe: an essential skill for those working in the informal sector.

Learning to Mine

As my time in Fenda came to a close, I no longer feared entering into the mines. Like many of my collaborators, my hesitation faded with experience as I became accustomed to lowering myself into the mine and moving through the cramped tunnels. One day, I volunteered to help with some of the mining. It started in the tunnel with Eric digging out the earth while I dragged out the heavy bags of earth. This was done in a prone position because of the height of the tunnel. At the centre of the mine, the bags were pulled out of the mine using a wooden winch. After exiting, Eric gave me a lighter load to take down to the river, which I still had trouble carrying. I shifted the weight from shoulder-to-shoulder, and then to the top of my head, as I tried to find a comfortable position. I had difficulty keeping my balance as I avoided the endless mineshafts along the path. When we got to the river, we emptied the earth into large piles, which Eric then

proceeded to pan through. His visual acuity allowed him to keep track of the gold residue found in between bits of rock and soil. The entire process was physically taxing labour.

Miners engage in all sorts of precarious and uncertain practices while they work. For many, like Eric, they rely on other miners to teach them. Therefore, mining practices pass from miner to another as they learn from each other. More specifically, many miners gain access through observing and collaborating within work syndicates, self-organised groups of miners. They share the labour, profits, and risks of mining gold. They also spend long periods of time together working, eating, and socialising. Through this social interaction, miners familiarise themselves with mining knowledge and practices. Eric told me that it was his friend, Alan, who first recruited him into a syndicate.

I worked with [Alan's syndicate]. It was my first time entering into the pits. They taught me a lot of things: how to enter the pits, how to pan [for] gold. At first, they told me everything that I was supposed to do. For [my] first time, it was hard to do all of those things [asked of me], so I learned from them. I just saw what they did and I followed them. Because my aim was to work and to get money, I did everything that was needed. I did everything that was hard, so I would get cash.

Eric learned through socialising with and observing his syndicate members.

Thus, mining practices move from experienced miners to new ones in this fashion. Zabrohy had a similar experience working in syndicates. His syndicate taught him by allowing him to observe and learn through experience.

[Panning] was my first job there. [I] learned from others. The idea is just to look for money [gold]. You just [see] what other people are doing and then you just follow [them]. You separate the gold from the mud. We work in syndicates. [In] my syndicate, one guy [pans], and the others work in the tunnel. You just [watch the] others, and you learn from them. That's the idea.

Like Eric, Zabrohy's syndicate taught him basic mining skills. As suggested by Zabrohy, panning also requires visual skill to see the tiny bits of gold in between the mud and pebbles. Arguably the most important part of mining practices, panning requires skilled and trusted eyes. They train each other because working in a syndicate entails trusting others to do their particular jobs. More than that, because syndicate members often spend long periods together, they often build strong friendships with each other. They depend on each other to perform their tasks, and to be present if in an emergency.

Further, with the uncertainty involved in mining, collaborating with others spreads the labour and risk. Because mining is so physically exerting, sharing the labour allows for rest periods and, therefore, miners can work for longer periods. Eric explained,

I used to work on my own [in the mines] because the job [of my syndicate members] was to dig the pits. If they dig the pits, they would leave [me] alone in those pits [to mine]. [Afterwards,] we would share the amount of gold that I got from their pits.

Because each member acts in a different, yet important, role, they all get an equal share of the profits. This was seen earlier in Spencer's story. By digging the mine, Spencer and Givemo have rights over the mine. Other miners can later come, work within, and have an equal share the profits with the mine owners.

Eric was proud of his development as a miner. From Eric's experience, he owed much to other miners who taught him the necessary skills and knowledge. They brought him into their syndicates and showed him how to work in the mines. Nowadays, Eric spends most of his time working alone. Further, as he

worked for longer periods in Fenda, he found himself in the position to mentor other young miners.

When I went back to Zimbabwe, I told my friends about what was happening here in Fenda. I bring my friends here, so we work together and I teach them how to work. From there, I was a senior *gweja*.

Calling himself a senior *gweja* refers to his position as a mentor to new miners. It meant people would come to him for guidance and expertise. Educating miners on techniques is central to the expansion of mining activity in the area. This informal method of education significantly eases the entry barriers to mining that new miners may encounter.

Some miners, like Lucky, did not start within a syndicate. Unlike Eric, Lucky found it difficult when he first came to Fenda because he did not know anyone. Others were unwilling to take him into their syndicates and teach him how to mine. Lucky explained,

They don't help me because they said, "you are a mature man, so you need to do it yourself." They just left me to mine, so I started my own mine. That's why I say that [my first time] was difficult for me because there was no one who taught me how to work. All of those people were the Mozambicans who didn't want any Zimbabweans to work in those mines. Some even said, "go back to Zimbabwe."

Lucky's experience of exclusion made it difficult for him to learn the appropriate mining practices. This impacted his confidence and he confided in me that he used to be afraid of entering into mines. It took him time and experience to the gain the confidence and level of comfort required to enter into the mines. He later found it difficult to work within syndicates because he thought it led to arguments and mistrust. Therefore, Lucky often spends most of his time working alone,

taking on all of the profits and the risks each time he enters. However, working alone, as Lucky often does, is somewhat reckless due to the ever-present threat of a mine collapse.

Mine collapses make it dangerous to work underground for long periods of time. The mines are strongest in the dry season when water stays out of the tunnels. However, in some areas, like Spencer's field, the high water table makes it perilous to access the gold belt even during the dry season. In these situations, miners stick closer to the centre and are less willing to dig far from this area. Wet conditions call for caution.

Living in Fenda is not a comfortable situation. Miners are constantly subjected to hazardous living arrangements and unsecured access to basic necessities. For example, many miners drink unfiltered ground water, which adversely affects their health. It is difficult to find a clean source of water in the area. Eric described to me the conditions in Fenda,

The living conditions, nowadays, I cannot say are good. At the [market], they sell unprotected foods. Even the water [here is bad]. Sometimes [we] buy water from [Vila de] Manica. There is a lot of rubbish, but it's just because there is [no one to clean it up]... because we are working and we need to get cash [we don't have time to clean it up ourselves]. So even if you walk around this place, you [will] see a lot of rubbish. It all depends. Even if you go to [Vila de] Manica, there's a lot of rubbish and the people of the community are used to staying in that environment, but for us from Zimbabwe, it is hard.

Eric contrasts the living conditions in Mozambique with those in Zimbabwe. He is also sceptical about the food sold in the marketplace. Passing by these food stalls each day, I tend to agree with him. Many of the cooked foods are uncovered and lay around in the heat. Eric recognises these dangerous practices

and avoids buying cooked food as it could harm his health. Therefore, he spends time cooking his own food with his friends.

Though informal and unorganised, mining practices spread quickly through Fenda. Newcomers observe and learn from more seasoned miners. From their narratives, work syndicates are the primary means of disseminating this knowledge. The long periods spent together allow the inexperienced to glean skills, information, and lore from others. Syndicates also provide some insurance in dangerous conditions both in and out of the mines. Having someone nearby in case of a mine collapse is a precaution many miners take. Further, having someone around is useful when avoiding the hazardous living conditions through communal food preparation. As informal as they are, mining practices follow a particular logic within the living and working conditions of Fenda.

Deep Impact

Crossing the Revué River just outside of Vila de Manica, I recognised at once that I was in the vicinity of artisanal gold mining. Panning along riverbanks causes siltation and the water adopts a brown-orange hue. The river carries the silt down from mining sites and eventually empties into a large lake. This is just one visible environmental change from the artisanal mining practices. In the fields of Fenda, ten-metre deep mines lay side-by-side. And down by the river banks, large man-made hills undulate up-and-down. These are the visible results of long-term artisanal gold mining. The cumulative effects significantly change people imagine the land and its future.

The fields around Fenda fan out with hundreds of visible mine shafts. Miners excavated each one solely using hand tools and rudimentary mining techniques. Overturning the land required an intense amount of labour as each piece of dirt was moved by hand. Over time, this physical labour shaped the landscape turning it from an arable field into a safety hazard. During my fieldwork, hundreds of mines lay abandoned across the land. A small number of mines I came across were filled again, but the majority remained open and disused. These kinds of mines pose environmental and safety hazards for people and livestock. Duncan, a newly-arrived miner, reflected,

It's destructive because there are so many shafts are within [the same] vicinity. It's not good for the environment, especially because there are villages nearby. The cattle, goats, and small kids, there are a lot of dangers for them. If [Fenda] was located at a further distance [from the villages], it would have been better.

The open mines are a safety concern especially at night for people and livestock who move across the uneven terrain. It not paying attention, one can easily fall into the closely spaced mines. Safety is just one question that intensive artisanal gold mining raises.

The mining activity has not been contained as mines stretch out into the distance. It is no longer somewhere when you can build on the surface. The current state of the terrain puts into question future land-use. Mining has turned the land upside-down. Tons of underground earth sits on top of top-soil. Grant observed, "You can't plough this anymore. It's not fertile. They won't do anything here. Just dump stuff here." He compared the site to a wasteland as the gold mining diminished the agricultural potential of the land. Further, mining is a short-term solution to the lack of economic opportunities in the region. Since the

discovery of gold, the local communities now rely on the gold economy to bring in the money.

Miners are well aware of the collective impact of their mining activities. They too can observe the progressive degradation of the land. There is no doubt about the amount of transformation that has occurred in the area over the short period of two years. However, these considerations are weighed against the limitations placed on miner's livelihoods and the achievement of their life projects. Tanaka was quite adamant about this trade-off when I asked him about the environmental impact of mining.

The area is not going to recover. The mines here are not going to be filled. This is why they don't allow it in Zimbabwe. It's because if they start [mining], then the land will suffer. [Mining is] not bad, but they're conserving land. The problem here [is] if they start to reduce [mining], then there is no employment in Mozambique. You are creating another problem by closing [another] problem. All of these guys—what do you think?—the best thing they can do is start on a farm here, employ people, and [earn] salaries. Besides, river siltation is all of the soil going [into the river and] causing damage. People are just looking for money to survive. Are you going to eat [those trees]? Is that going to be your dinner tonight? You can't because your stomach will complain.

Tanaka was adamant that the survival of people depended on mining. His framing of the problem considers land conservation as an important practice. However, conservation of the area is a cost they are willing to make when they cannot feed themselves. This is complicated by the fact that Tanaka—like many of the other Zimbabweans—will not remain here much longer after the gold is exhausted. Tanaka added,

The land is already degrading because we are earning a living through mining. There is no other way. The important thing is if someone is earning something from [using] this land, [so] it's better

for us to mine. But if there [are] a lot of ways to get money, then we can leave mining.

He makes an important comment on the economic situation in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Miners are only mining because of the money. If there were alternative well-paying jobs then people would move into other industries. However, since there are not, miners invariably depend on mining earnings.

Thousands of miners worked in Fenda in 2010. Seasoned miners in Fenda remember the constant buzz of activity, and, consequently, the local economy also boomed as vendors and buyers stayed busy throughout the day and night. In contrast, not many miners have returned this year. Some have gone in search of other mining possibilities in other sites—such as in Tete province and in Gorongosa district—as artisanal gold mining continues to grow in Mozambique and to attract increasing numbers of miners. Rumours influence would-be miners who possess expectations of earning more money. Mining booms are fickle and depend on rumours of wealth to sustain the economy. In the absence of official information and formal institutions, rumours build on each other and spiral out of control. The speculative character of artisanal gold mining reflects an “economy of appearances”. Anna Tsing writes, “[i]n speculative enterprises, profit must be imagined before it can be extracted; the possibility of economic performance must be conjured like a spirit to draw an audience of potential investors” (2005:57). Therefore, the informal nature of artisanal gold mining leaves it vulnerable to booms-and-busts. A boom, or quick expansion, builds upon itself as rumours of big finds spread, which in turn, increases immigration and the likelihood of big finds. Because of the low obligations to land

owners and fellow workers, miners leave on a whim and often follow rumours to the next sites, where new promises of gold abundance reside.

In 2011, the number of miners has significantly declined. I estimate around a few hundred miners were currently working during the period of my research. The decline is due to the perception that there is no more gold to be found. Miners often remarked to me on the lower quantities being found each day. In Fenda, rumours were already amok as many believe that there is no gold to be found. Eric told me,

That's the end of the area. There's no other place to work. The area won't stay for 2 or 3 years. People just want the cash. Now there's less gold [and] you find people going to Tete. [Fenda] is now a ghost place.

The decline in mining is also marked by lessening vendors and gold buyers coming to the area. This, in turn, forces miners to leave as they depend on vendors for food and supplies. This also depresses the price of gold as the remaining gold buyers are able to negotiate lower prices from the miners. Just as booms depend on rumours to elevate perceptions of wealth, busts work in the same manner as well. They are self-fulfilling predictions, which lead to physical and social changes in Fenda.

The rumour of Fenda's decline, however, has not deterred all miners as some continue to work in Fenda. Some continue to operate under the belief that there is still gold to be found underneath Fenda. Lucky explained to me,

[In the past,] even [after] one shift, you would [find] a gram [or maybe] even twelve grams. But nowadays, it's very rare to even find a point. It depends on your luck. [If] you are a lucky man, [then] you [will] get one [kilogram of gold] per bag [of earth].

Lucky is not giving up because he still perceives opportunities for mining in Fenda. Grant also acknowledges that mining depends on luck.

Here, it depends on the day. It depends on the sample. You can get two points or two kilograms. You don't know.

Grant rationalises that gold is still available in the area as miners continue to produce gold finds every day. However, there is always the chance that they will hit a large deposit as there is more space in the surrounding areas for Fenda to grow. Therefore, Grant and other miners remain as rumours continue to circulate about the gold fortunes in Fenda.

Changing Possibilities

Zimbabwean miners arrived in Fenda under varying personal circumstances. However, their narratives reflect the ongoing political and economic uncertainty in Zimbabwe. From their previous occupations as students, electricians, and accountants, miners have come to as a means of reworking their livelihoods. They relied on border-jumping as a means of accessing more favourable political conditions in Mozambique. Border-jumping constitutes an essential skill in the process of informalisation. While in Fenda, miners rely on each other in the form of work syndicates. These informal work groups organise around mining practices to extend the productivity of their labour. Mining practices engage with the larger gold markets through gold buyers. Their exchanges allow for miners to continue to pursue life projects in Mozambique, and more importantly, in Zimbabwe, where their social lives continue as well.

From the narratives of miners, Fenda is in both economic and environmental decline. The concentrated amount of mining has exhausted much

of the gold and has altered the possibilities of future land use. Many miners have already moved on to other mining booms in Gorongosa and Tete. However, some miners continue to remain even in the declining conditions. The lower population has altered the economy significantly. There are less people who need to eat and drink, the prices have sunk, and the amount of gold mining activity has decreased. An artisanal mining economy is one necessarily built on rumours, but it has also led to its decline. The trend seems bleak for the miners, but also to the local communities that depend on this gold economy. However, even though not many miners are actually left, new mines continue to be opened in these fields. Miners have not completely abandoned Fenda yet.

Within this willingness to remain, Zimbabwean miners continue to negotiate their social roles with other local actors. It is ever more important to relate these individual understandings at a social level. The next chapter moves into a discussion of the social roles of miners within Fenda and further clarifies their practices and social lives within Fenda.

Chapter 4: Miner Politics

Since its discovery in 2009, miners have significantly altered the landscape of Fenda. However, the current topography is not just a result of unfettered mining with inferior technology. Rather, it is the accumulation of ecological practices within a particular a particular mode of production. Paul Robbins writes, “a mode of production is a combination of key social and material elements; these elements are constant, and include labor, technology, and capital, but their interrelationships, combination and recombination are in constant flux, leading to differing ways of making a living from nature, and changing organization of society across history and over space” (2004:55). This shifts the attention from solely analysing the material practices of miners to looking at the cultural and social significance of their labour as ecological practices. Political ecology is necessary as a way of framing these ecological practices within broader political economic constraints (Peet and Watts 1996:4). In Fenda, the ongoing informalisation and economic uncertainty in Zimbabwe continue to influence the ecological practices of miners. If this is the case, then miners’ narratives should also reflect these constraints by attaching themselves—socially and practically—to artisanal gold mining in Fenda.

In this chapter, I focus on uncovering the understanding of miners in relation to their changing environments. I also demonstrate how social relationships shape the role of miners in Fenda and, thus, the outcomes of their practices. I use the concept of “modes of belonging” to uncover these attachments and understandings. This takes into account the reflexive elements

of production and labour migration. Blair Rutherford writes, “Modes of belonging’ refer to the routinised discourses, social practices and institutional arrangements that define particular forms of recognition that shape access to material and nonmaterial resources; the ways in which one becomes incorporated into particular places” (2008:403). Therefore, an analysis using political ecology should also include the ways in which the decisions and narratives of miners’ re-imagine the ways in which they fit into Fenda. Further, the social and political relationships with other actors shape miners’ practices and access to gold mining. Their work depends on the presence of vendors, gold buyers, and land owners. In an informal economy with a lack of institutional structures, miners negotiate their access through these individual relationships.

Miners depend on particular forms of recognition that define their ability to access the area. In this case, the willingness of Zimbabwean miners to identify as *gwejas* denotes their attachment to this particular livelihood, its practices, and lifestyle. I suggest that identification with a particular social role is a form of political practice that allows miners to exist within a particular ecology. In *Expectations of Modernity*, James Ferguson demonstrates the changing expectations of Zambian miners during the rise of copper mining. Ferguson writes,

I use the term *cultural style* to refer to *practices that signify differences* between social categories. Cultural styles in this usage do not pick out total modes of behavior but rather poles of social signification, cross-cutting and cross-cut by other such poles... I use the term *style* specifically to emphasize the accomplished, performative nature of such practices. (1999:95, original emphasis)

Cultural style is a means of accessing cultural resources as determined by miners' performative relation to mining. In Fenda then, *gweja* identity prevails because of their understanding of who they are as miners. Furthermore, *gwejas* are necessarily gendered as well. Through their assertion of mining identities, they inevitably exclude others. Women are excluded in various ways from mining in the area not due to their ability to perform the jobs, but to cultural limitations on their ability to gain recognition as *gwejas*. However, identification is not a totalising process. As miners also make use of other identities to recognise and define contradictory practices. Therefore, in Fenda, *gombiros* also necessarily exist. This is a rather pejorative term that refers to the more negative aspects of mining activities in Fenda. *Gombiros* act in ways that *gwejas* cannot, mainly be stealing from, and lying to other miners. However, these identities are not mutually exclusive. A miner can be both a *gombiro* and a *gweja* in different instances and contexts.

The cumulative effects of mining continue to significantly alter the shape and understanding of Fenda. Struggles over power and access fuel the momentum of these changes. I begin this chapter by discussing miners' interpretations of the land usage. I then refer to the social relationship of miners to two other significant actors, land owners and gold buyers. These relationships shape miners' access to land and resources and, also, their understandings of their social roles. Finally, I analyse the development of mining identities in relation to these changes, and discuss the shaping of those identities through struggles over access. The purpose is to show that mining practices emerge from

contested cultural resources and social relationships that require negotiation over meaning and power.

Policing the Fields

When miners speak about the police, they always contrast it with the amount of police surveillance in Zimbabwe. Policing over mining practices there is much more strictly enforced. Miners do not feel secure in those areas, and therefore many have come to Mozambique in search of a similar livelihood with those restrictions. Official police officers rarely visit Fenda, preferring to leave it alone. Likely, land owners have an agreement in place with the regional authority, Chief Chadzuca. This political acceptance of mining in the area allows Fenda to operate untouched by official authorities. However, in Fenda, the *communiterias* exist as local policing agents and mediators over mining disputes. Eric explained that some were former miners, most likely Mozambican, chosen by the community of miners and land owners. Others came with documents pronouncing their authority. Over time, they began to take advantage of the miners.

Communiterias have the authority to impose penalties on miners who work without the consent of a land owner. For example, I arrived in Fenda one afternoon and walked through my usual route past the market and down to the river. I was told that I would find Eric working down there. When I arrived, he was knee deep in a pool of water panning through his findings from the night before. He worked throughout the night. As he panned, he told me that today there was a new rule being enforced in Fenda. Miners were being asked to get written

confirmation for each bag of earth that brought down to wash at the river. Eric pulled out a torn up piece of paper with some illegible writing on it. He got this from his land owner and this allowed him to operate without harassment from the *communiterias*—local authorities. Eric speculated that there was some collusion between them and the land owners in order to limit the amount of mining done on land without permission. This rule did not hold up for long as there was no efficient way to check everyone's bags. However, it was an attempt by land owners to limit unwanted mining activity in the fields. Further, it was also an opportunity for *communiterias* to impose penalties on miners who did not conform to the new rule. Therefore, *communiterias* also make claims over power and control. Duncan told me,

I think [the *communiterias*] are doing a good job protecting people. But it is not good when I see them [extorting] some of the [miners]. I don't think it should be like that. They must have a discussion with the person. And if the person is wrong, then they hand him over the police, and the law can run its course. But they take the law into their own hands and that's not good.

Communiterias abuse their position of power at times. They penalise miners who do not follow the rules with fines, repossessing their gold samples, or taking their equipment. They will also impose these penalties for those who do not respect their decisions. As the *communiterias* are not paid a formal salary to do their job, they earn money from taking from the miners. This leads to abuses in power.

Maxwell notes,

The police here are not nice. They always look for money. [There is] lots of corruption here. Someone can give the police money and the case is over. I'm not happy with how they handle the cases here.

Communiterias accept bribes from miners to settle their disputes. In this manner, they influence the outcomes of mining practices. Creating mistrust with miners, they abuse their authority to enrich themselves by imposing arbitrary penalties and fines.

Through their actions and practices, these *communiterias* also shape the manner in which miners operate here. In Fenda, there is a local tradition that instructs all people to stop working for a day when a person dies in the area. This only happened twice during my research period. Miners often spend their time in the market drinking and feasting during this obligatory rest period. However, some ignore these traditions and continue to mine. These are periods where *communiterias* exert their authority and fine misfits. Eric was caught during one of these periods, and had his equipment confiscated. However, he proclaimed that he was not afraid of their authority. He proceeded to argue with the *communiterias* over their penalty and eventually had his belongings returned. Eric's tale demonstrates that the power of the *communiterias* is not absolute. With varying success, miners are able to negotiate terms with the *communiterias*. More daring miners will push the boundaries of the *communiterias'* authority.

Owning the Land

In terms of operating in specific areas, miners need to negotiate access with land owners. Land owners are Mozambicans who retain rights over the land. Their position is arranged through traditional land tenure through the regional chief. Through their rights over the land, they lease sites to miners. Land owners often ask for a fee from the miners to open up a new mine on their land. Both

parties negotiate over the price and location of the mine. Land owners play a role in the decision of where miners work. Through their rights over the land and status, many of them choose where miners will dig. In Spencer and Givemo's field, the fee is set at 300 *meticaís*. Through their fee, the land owner bestows control over the mine to Spencer and Givemo. This recognition allows them to further pass on the labour to other miners who will work in the mine, after which they will all get a share of the profits.

More organised land owners patrol their lands to make sure no one is opening up new mines without permission. They work with the *communiterias* to limit this clandestine mining. Eric told me,

It's difficult for Zimbabweans to work without permission from the Mozambicans, or the communities. You can go to jail. If you want to work you have to talk with the owners of the land or you will end up arrested. For you to dig here, you have to communicate with the owner. If you dig without permission you will be arrested. There are policemen [*communiterias*] here.

Land owners and *communiterias* work together, at times, to restrict mining activity and capture more of the mining profits. Where Spencer works, the land owner is much more organised. He puts more effort into watching the mining activities and controlling how they mine the land. Therefore, the field has a discernible pattern of land use. When I started my research, the mines were found just on one side of the field and, as time went on, the mines slowly spread across the field. The negotiation between land owners and miners shapes the ecological outcome of this particular field. Further, in fields where there is a lack of land owner control, miners decide upon the location of the mine. They often go near areas where gold has been previously found, but far enough away from

surrounding mines, so their tunnel networks do not intersect. The absence of field oversight results in different patterns of usage. Therefore, the (dis)involvement of landowners critically alters the ecological relationship of miners to the specific sites in which they mine.

According to miners, mining has irreversibly altered the economic potential in this area. The money earned is not being reinvested into the area, and the land will no longer support any agricultural activity. However, the gold economy continues to generate income for many. I posed this dilemma on many of the miners. In each case, they deflected the onus of stewardship on the land owners. Tanaka told me,

When they offer someone a place to mine, [the land owner] takes some money for the pit about 300 meticaïs. After that, [the land owner should pay] someone to fill the pit.

Land owners collect fees from the miners as the cost of using their land.

Tanaka's understanding is that the money should be used to fill in the mines after they are finished with them because they own the rights over it. The miners are unwilling to do it themselves because of the intense labour required to fill the mine again. Therefore, they further claim that the land owners are greedy, and just pocket the money. Whoever is to blame, the neglect of the abandoned mines has left Fenda in an irreparable state.

In other areas, land owners cannot control the mining activity. They lack the resources and support of the *communiterias* to collect fees from miners. Lucky told me that miners and *communiterias* alike were cheating one of the local land owners, Mr. Snake.

Lots of people here, even Zimbabweans, did not respect Mr. Snake. He didn't like that. So Mr. Snake is not happy that people are still here. There are no shares [in the profits] that go to him. People work freely without giving him anything. His family is still hungry. He is not happy with what [the miners] are doing in this area because there is no help [from the *communiterias*]. [The miners] come in his fields and take [gold], but for [Mr. Snake], he [does not] benefit from that. It's bad. The police [*communiterias*] are doing things [collecting fines]. They are cheating [Mr. Snake] instead of giving him some shares [money], [they are keeping it].

In Mr. Snake's field, miners are not respecting his claim to the land because cannot mobilise the *communiterias* to enforce the rules on his behalf. When they do respond, the *communiterias* collect the fines to enrich themselves and do not pass it on to Mr. Snake. Further, miners, like Eric, are aware of these less-organised land owners. They take advantage of their inability to prohibit mining. Eric's mines are located mostly on Mr. Snake's land, yet he does not give Mr. Snake any of the money. Therefore, the relationship between miners and land owners is not uniform. The particularities of their relationship also shape control over, and access to land.

Trading Gold

Gold buyers link miners into a large commodity chain. Miners extract the gold and sell it on to buyers who then sell the gold on to more lucrative markets. Through their exchanges with miners, they bring foreign currency into Mozambique and fund the burgeoning gold economy. In Fenda, gold buyers are found in the market areas, wandering the fields, and sitting down by the riverside, waiting for miners to approach them with their gold samples. Each buyer carries a digital scale to weigh the gold, and a large supply of cash to purchase the gold. I was often privy to the transaction between miners and buyers. Still wet from

working in the river, miners often go straight from panning to the buyers with their sample. Buyers then carefully and skilfully sift through the dirt so that only pure gold remains. They place it on their scale and pay out accordingly. From the transactions I witnessed, miners would only produce miniscule amounts, tenths of a gram. Therefore, they could only negotiate low prices from the gold buyers who took advantage of their superior bargaining position. Most miners end up selling their gold to the many gold buyers who work in Fenda because they cannot access more lucrative marketplaces.

A requirement of gold buyers is having the necessary capital to buy up the gold in the field. Further, they need to know how to sell it other markets for higher profits. With these attributes, anyone can work as a gold buyer. Those found in Fenda are a diverse group. Eric told me,

Some [gold buyers] are from Zimbabwe, Nigeria, South Africa, Somalia, Botswana, [and] Lebanon. Lots of people send their buyers. There were a lot coming here last year. They just send their agents to buy on their behalf.

Eric claims that buyers found in Fenda are bankrolled by wealthier gold buyers who wait in town. Given the global price of gold, buyers who come to Fenda and buy straight from the miners stand to make substantial profits through moving the gold to other markets, most likely smuggling it across to South Africa and Zimbabwe. Therefore, gold smuggling represents a substantial business in Mozambique.

Miners are more concerned about the overall decline of gold prices. As the quantities of gold found in the area fall, the price of gold has also fallen significantly. Buyers can offer less because they recognise that miners cannot

afford to hold on to their gold. Miners require money immediately to pay for supplies, food, and so on. Eric complained,

[In the past,] they were paying 120 [meticaïs per point]. If you went [to a gold buyer] with ten grams [of gold], your [profits] would increase. It all depends on the [amount of] gold that you have. So now it's difficult, [gold buyers will only] buy for 100 [meticaïs per point], [but] if you go with a lot of grams, then they might even pay 200 [meticaïs] per [point].

The prices vary with the quantity of gold a miner can sell. Gold buyers are much more likely to take a smaller profit margin per transaction when they buy from miners, if they know they can resell larger quantities of gold. The amount of gold that buyers possess also influences their negotiations in further exchanges along the commodity chain.

Tanaka muses that the buyers who come to Fenda add very little value to the mining process, but are able to collect the profits because they know who to sell to. He explained,

[The wealthier gold buyers] give money to Mozambicans to [come to Fenda to] buy gold. [The Mozambican buyer] tells the boss [that he] is buying gold at 120 [*meticaïs* per point], then he comes here and buys gold at 100 [meticaïs per point]. The [Mozambican buyers] are [keeping] the extra 20. At the end, [miners] just come and surrender the gold and the money every day. On top of that [Mozambican buyer] gets his commission. Some [of the wealthier gold buyers] go with the gold to South Africa. There are even some Zimbabweans who buy gold here and then sell it in Zimbabwe.

Tanaka resents the sort of profits squeezed from the miners. Their “surrender” of the gold demonstrates the economic constraints that limit their ability to negotiate for higher prices with buyers. Because many miners are eager to sell their gold at the end of the day, gold buyers negotiate lower prices. Further, he also comments on the ability of wealthier buyers to smuggle the gold to other

countries. They also participate within an informal economy that relies on exploiting the differential gold market conditions in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. His comments reveal the geographic contours of an artisanal gold mining economy as gold, money, and people flow back into Zimbabwe through these informal channels.

Buyers do not control access to the mines, but rather access to a wider gold commodity chain that miners are a critical part of. However, miners are often at a disadvantage because they do not have the same knowledge and ability to work in these larger markets. Tanaka continued,

The buyers are paying [us] \$30 per gram. They can [afford to] pay [us] \$70 per gram. They know the real markets. They know where to go to get better prices [for the gold].

Tanaka's reference to the amount buyers can afford to pay alludes to the global price of gold, which hit record levels during this period, approximately \$67 US dollars per gram. Therefore, the poor bargaining position of miners is not attributed to their ignorance of other gold markets and their profitability. It is, rather, that they lack the means and ability to access these profits. They are left negotiating with local gold buyers who probably do receive the global market price when they sell it on. Buyers, like miners, are also involved in webs of negotiation and power. Furthermore, like miners, buyers also use access to informal markets to augment their own personal fortunes. Eric commented,

It is better to be buyer [because] you get cash. People will come to you and you don't have to go to the pits. Labour is from the pits. All of this dirt [pointing at piles of earth] was put out. It used to be in the pits. If you saw last week, one man died in that area because there is a risk [getting] inside the mine. If you are a buyer, you are safe.

Eric realises that the difference between a miner and buyer is that a buyer will never enter into the mine. This strikes many miners as unfair. This also explains Tanaka's anger with gold buyers: miners assume all of the physical and financial risk, yet get paid the least. In Fenda, buyers use money to gain access, while miners use their labour.

The relationship between miners and buyers is based on an exchange of gold and money, and, at a social level, on mistrust of each other. In private conversation, many of the miners accused the buyers of using inaccurate digital scales or tampering with the process. They see these as attempts by the gold buyers to cheat them out of money. Because of this, miners often visit different buyers while their expectations of a buyer's honesty are continuously reviewed. Further, Eric pointed to another role of gold buyers. Eric explained,

I want to blame the gold buyers. These are the people who get [*gombiros*] to come and rob us. What [buyers] do is when you go with good stuff, [a find of] one gram [of gold] and up, they [will then] spread the rumours to the [*gombiros*]. [Buyers] tell [*gombiros*] about the details because what they need is gold.

Eric accused gold buyers of acting as rumourmongers and generating disputes, violence, and theft among miners. Because buyers depend on gold from to thrive, their interests are only in buying up larger quantities. Therefore, they spread rumours of big finds to increase the mining activity in the area. However, this also incites *gombiros*—thieves—into action. Therefore, buyers not only act as gatekeepers to wider gold commodity chain, they also exchange information and rumours with miners who act accordingly. Their relationship influences the practices of miners, and, more importantly, the roles in which miners find themselves.

Identifying Miners

Zimbabwean miners have established themselves in Fenda. Their social roles are based upon a particular understanding of their purpose and labour. Thus, they fit into a particular mode of belonging in Fenda. As noted in Chapter Three, miners understand the environmental trends and consequences of their actions. However, they also operate in social, political, economic and cultural conditions that affect the ecological and personal outcomes of mining activities. To articulate miners' understandings of their role in Fenda with a discussion of its political ecology, I focus on the identity of the *gweja* because, as I understand it, it gives them access to feelings of belonging and authority. Therefore, analysing the *gweja* identity is one manner in understanding the practices of miners in relation to their cultural styles and expectations.

The term *gweja* is borrowed from other informal mining sites in Zimbabwe, such as Chiadzwa (Katsaura 2010:106). It identifies a miner to a particular place and work by defining not only their economic role, but their social and ecological roles as well. Furthermore, in Fenda, a *gweja* is strictly gendered. Their understanding of their roles is based upon masculine ideals of what it means to be a miner. This invariably restricts access to those who cannot perform the role of the *gweja*.

The *gweja* identity is subject to a particular mode of belonging. Miners' social roles in relation to other actors shape their understandings and practices. In their narratives, miners' understandings of their roles are linked to their personal histories. In Fenda, Zimbabweans experience a sense of freedom when

they mine. They contrast this with their experiences in Zimbabwe, where they have experienced more policing in, and penalties for, artisanal mining. Tanaka mentioned,

If I go to Zimbabwe, [artisanal gold mining] is illegal. If you are found with gold, you are looking at five years. The police will be after you. You are risking your life.

Tanaka's worries are constituted through his previous work as miner in Zimbabwe. He expects police repression in the artisanal mining sector because of its illegal status. The legal repercussions of illegal gold mining in Zimbabwe are much more severe. Miners contrast this past with the new feelings of freedom in Mozambique. Duncan shared with me,

It's a free environment [in Fenda]. We failed to work in Zimbabwe because the law enforcement agents were harassing us. It's better here [in Fenda].

In Fenda, Zimbabwean miners are much more comfortable working in this industry. The lack of government regulation and police enforcement makes it easier for miners to operate unimpeded. In Mozambique, it is not a crime to trade gold or be in possession of gold without a licence. The government's reluctance to limit mining allows access to Zimbabweans.

The feeling of freedom on the part of Zimbabweans is not completely unchecked. Remember, many of them border-jumped to get to Fenda. This technically strips them of their legal rights. However, given the lack of opportunities a citizenship affords in Zimbabwe, many take this chance and border-jump. Zabrohy explained further,

It is illegal to mine in Zimbabwe without a [permit]. Anyone can mine in Fenda. On one hand, it's safe because you are here. No one will turn up and say anything. But on the other hand, it's not

safe because of other rules. It's difficult for us if we don't have ID, because it means you border-jumped.

Having crossed the border illegally, Zabrohy admits that he loses some of his rights and protections as a citizen. However, this is balanced by the lack of government oversight in the area and the general feeling that Zimbabweans are welcomed to mine there. Zimbabweans are subjected to flexible rules that govern mining in Fenda. Being welcomed to work does not equate to fair treatment. Zimbabweans are under constant threat of imprisonment and deportation by the police who sometimes come in extraordinary circumstances. Most of the times, the involvement of authorities is a costly affair for miners who need to pay bribes in a dispute.

Despite this lack of rights, the Zimbabweans I spoke to still prefer working in Fenda. In their estimation, mining in Fenda offers an income, but without the level of police intervention seen in Zimbabwe. This makes it easier for miners to enter into mining practices. Maxwell, a Zimbabwean miner, added,

I can work anywhere. I can mine, so that I can find money. So I am not concerned about the owner of the field. Zimbabweans are also allowed to mine here. They are the masterminds of these mines. Just go and see who the supervisors [mine owners] are and who is going down [into the mines].

In his narrative, Maxwell mixes feelings of freedom with those of belonging and authority. Maxwell attributes the success of mining in Fenda to the Zimbabweans who have been coming to this area. As he understands it, they are the ones who brought the proper mining techniques and knowledge. They also occupy the roles of responsibility and masculinity through supervising and entering into

mines. Therefore, as a Zimbabwean and a miner, Maxwell feels he belongs in Fenda.

In finding a way to belong in Mozambique, Zimbabweans identify themselves as *gwejas*. They believe that they are more educated in mining practices than the Mozambicans. Therefore, they are not just ordinary miners. Rather, they are skilled ones who know how to mine effectively. Because of this, they also believe that they offer Mozambicans the knowledge of these correct mining practices. In their argument, without Zimbabweans, the area would have never developed. Eric told me,

[Zimbabweans] are now skilled. Sometimes we work alone, but most of the time we work together. We know how to enter a mine, even a dangerous mine, even without it falling. We enter [into dangerous mines] because we know how to construct [them properly]. Because if all the pillars [supporting structures] have been dug out, then you have to put in stones [to support the mine]. You have to [fortify it], so the pit will be safe. Most of the Mozambicans don't know how to do this, they just work. They don't know how to [protect] the pillars [supporting structures] underground. They don't know how to mine. You have to teach them.

Outlining his own techniques, Eric believes that only Zimbabweans understand how to secure a mine. Following Eric underground on several occasions, he was able to instruct me on the features of the mine of which I should be aware. He was also able to demonstrate the construction of the tunnels and his rationale for mining in particular ways. With his amount of technical knowledge, Eric criticises the practices of Mozambicans miners in general. However, Eric's claim is exaggerated as many Mozambican miners work in Fenda and continue to find gold every day. Through this knowledge of mining, Eric and other Zimbabweans have found a way to belong in Fenda.

The role of teaching mining practices to others is a common element in Zimbabwean miner's narratives. Eric identifies himself as a senior *gweja* because he has taught others how to mine. It is also an identity that he has adopted to distinguish himself from inexperienced miners. Through his tenure in Fenda, Eric taught several Mozambicans his techniques to find and extract gold deposits. Lucky identifies himself in this manner. He explained,

Nowadays, I must be strong to work alone. I'm a senior [gweja]. I now teach others how to work and [how] to find the areas in which the [gold] belt [lies] because it's very hard to know where [it is]. You need to know the movement of the [gold] belt to find the money, [and be able to follow] where it goes and where it comes from.

The gold belt is thin layer of rocks where gold deposits are found. Generally, miners dig downwards until reaching the gold belt. Afterwards, they dig lateral tunnels stemming from the shaft as the miners follow the gold belt. Experienced miners recognise the rock features of the gold belt and know when to stop digging downwards. However, inexperienced miners might dig short of or past the gold belt. As Lucky mentioned, understanding and recognising the gold belt is a critical skill in finding gold. By mentoring others, especially Mozambicans, Lucky and Eric justify their presence and belonging. In the form of mining education, many Zimbabweans feel that they have given the area not just their labour, but also their knowledge.

The offshoot of this type of belonging is that many feel entitled to work in Fenda. Zimbabweans often use sharp contrasts between their work efforts and education in comparison to Mozambicans. Eric said that he "denigrates" the Mozambicans because of their lack of education and organisation. Through these criticisms, Eric feels that his work is needed. Eric further explained,

If you look at Fenda, Zimbabweans were the first to survey the area. We know some areas [in Fenda] have a lot of gold. We were just trespassers at first. [Land owners] only allowed Mozambicans, because they knew how clever the Zimbabweans were. They fear us if they see us. [However, Mozambicans] are not used to working in harsh conditions. The Mozambicans don't have ideas [of how to mine]. They don't know how to keep the mine well. When they go down, they dig everywhere. That's not how you do it. You need to follow the belt. It's not just horizontal. It goes vertically and horizontally, so you have to follow the way of the stones. I remember someone saying Mozambicans are poor because they build houses on top of money.

In his narrative, Eric describes a relationship whereby Zimbabweans have the advantage over Mozambicans. He emasculates their character of Mozambicans by declaring their fear of Zimbabweans' cleverness, courage, and work ethic. Furthermore, Eric also conjures up a national-scale through his comparison of Zimbabweans' and Mozambicans' mining practices. In this moment, he invokes past sentiments of Zimbabwe's economy in relation to Mozambique's. As mentioned in previous chapters, past labour migration history demonstrates that many Mozambican men left to exploit opportunities in Zimbabwe. The historically uneven economic conditions created more demand for wage labourers within Zimbabwe. This has no longer been the case since the onset of structural adjustment and political violence in Zimbabwe. However, Eric's narrative sidesteps this blip in Zimbabwean history, and the fact that Zimbabweans are the ones now on the move. Through this narrative then, Eric invokes his entitled authority through his selective understanding of history.

Gweja narratives also focus on suffering, strength and hard work. Through these attributes, Zimbabwean miners invest themselves in Fenda. They feel that

their ingenuity and labour contribute to the economic gains experienced in the area. Maxwell told me,

A hard life teaches you something. No one told me there is a road to Mozambique. I just hoped and prayed that there is a path and that I will reach that place. A hard life teaches you where to go.

Miners experience extreme forms of difficulty working in dangerous circumstances, carrying large loads, sleeping in the elements, and so on. These experiences marry *gweja* identities to the land. They invoke a particular experience of hardship alongside mining. Lucky also told me,

At first everything was new, and I was afraid to work underground. A proverb came to mind: hard work never hurt anyone. I just learned. At first, everything was hard for me.

The hard work in mining did not bother Lucky. Living as a *gweja*, he expected it to be difficult. As mentioned earlier, Lucky suffered much more because he spent most of his early periods teaching himself how to mine. Therefore, it took a while for him to figure out and improve his mining practices. However, Lucky's hard work and mining knowledge tied him to the land. He invested his labour and time into this particular livelihood as a *gweja* and, as a consequence, relates to Fenda ecologically. Even though mining is reducing the agricultural potential and environmental conditions in the area, miners recognise these changes are the effects of their labour on the land. In this paradoxical way, Zimbabwean miners tie themselves to the land as *gwejas*.

Gambling with *Gombiros*

In contrast to the identity of the *gweja*, miners also brought up an alternative identity, the *gombiro*. Where *gwejas* suffer and work hard, *gombiros* are thieves, bullies, and cheats. My collaborators warned me that in past times,

Zimbabwean *gombiros* ruled Fenda in gangs. They used violent tactics to exploit the good fortune of other miners. Bullying syndicates and entering in to rich mines without permission, their brazen activity defined the limits between acceptable and unacceptable mining practices. From what I understand, even the *communiterias* and land owners operated in fear of these *gombiro* gangs. However, these particular *gombiros* were eventually expelled from Fenda by the Mozambican police. Now, the term refers to those who work in clandestine ways to enrich themselves.

The appearance of *gombiros* in Fenda is not surprising given the lack of proper policing and oversight in the fields. This allows miners to operate almost without restriction. *Gombiro* practices can be characterised as *kukiya-kiya*: the artful way of getting by. Jeremy Jones writes, "*kukiya-kiya* is all about a 'zigzag' search for opportunity in the hardened face of reality" (2010:287). The *gombiro* identity parallels this emerging ethic. On one hand, miners would constantly refer to others as brothers as they work cooperatively and educate each other. Working side-by-side, they gain each other's trust. On the other, they can lie and steal from each other. Miners can manipulate and use that trust to exploit opportunities. The identity of the *gombiro* draws upon the feelings of necessity as characterised by *kukiya-kiya*.

During a conversation one day, Lucky told me that his mining went extremely well. A mine owner invited Lucky to survey the mine, and check the gold belt for him. In return, Lucky would let the mine owner know if the mine had any large gold deposits. During mining, Lucky discovered some gold deposits.

However, Lucky lied to the mine owner, telling him that the samples did not contain any gold and that he would have to keep looking the next day. This allowed him to pocket the profits and work in the same mine the next day. Lucky stretched the truth and convinced the owner to invite him back to extract more samples from the mine. His position as a senior *gweja* afforded him this trust, of which he took advantage. However, Lucky did not have any remorse for working in this manner. It was necessary to him to build up as much of his own savings despite having the trust of others. Therefore, *gombiros* have an identity of necessity.

Eric also characterises *gombiros* in a complex way. They work through necessity, but they can also use force, coercion and lies to take from others. Eric explained his perspective to me,

A *gombiro* is someone who steals. Me, I am a *gombiro*, but I don't fight anyone. That's why I say everyone is a *gombiro*. If you enter into a mine that you are not allowed to enter, then you are a thief.

In Eric's understanding, anyone can be a *gombiro* because it is necessary to be one to get by. Therefore, miners are often met with suspicion by others because of the dual nature of miners. It is difficult for a miner to trust someone that he does not know. Trust is an equally valuable commodity in Fenda because it can be kept or exploited. To protect themselves, many of my collaborators presented themselves to others with pseudonyms. Eric and Lucky speculated that this was because many of the miners were criminals from Zimbabwe living in Mozambique. Because of the lack of identification, miners are able to invent different names and, thus, identities for themselves in Fenda.

Gombiro practices are also shaped by actors in Fenda, including other miners and gold buyers. Miners recognise that *gombiros* are a fixture in mining communities. Therefore, they act accordingly and are usually protective of the location of their mine and the quality of their gold samples. However, in this environment, *gombiros* thrive on rumours. If word spreads of a rich mine, it will also attract the attention of *gombiros*. Eric told me,

The *gombiros* [will] follow you until you enter into the mine and then they come inside and fight against you. [*Gombiros* will also] come to river and see the samples of [miners]. They don't say anything and just look. When you leave, they [will] come with you. You don't think that you are being followed. They just look like they are passing [by]. If they see your mine, they [will] come at night. There is no chance for you [to fight them] because there are many guys. It is difficult to defend ourselves from [*gombiros*]. Sometimes they carry weapons. Those wrenches [iron pry-bars] are very dangerous. They will beat you with it. [The only] thing [a miner can do] is to permit them to [enter] and to ask [them], "please don't break the mine. We are beating each other and killing each other. Just search where you want and leave the mine in good condition because I am earning a living.

In Eric's narrative, *gombiros* also employ more violent practices. There is a lot of negotiation and conflict between miners. Since *gombiros* can be anyone, miners are on constant alert for others entering into their mines. Generally, *gombiros* go after rich mines. They steal, attack, and intimidate others in order to get access to wealthy deposits.

Gombiros, however, are not mutually exclusive from *gwejas*. Miners can operate in either role depending on the circumstances. Further, as part of an informal economy, these types of practices and characteristics complement the *gweja* identity by allowing miners to acts in ways not characteristic of *gwejas*. Therefore, the identity of *gombiros* and *gwejas* are better understood as

containers for the particular practices that miners engage in. Within the particular mode of belonging found in Fenda, the sense of belonging for a *gweja* stems from his hard work and sacrifice. However, for a *gombiro*, this sense of belonging does not exist. A *gombiro* hurts and exploits other miners for personal gain regardless of the consequences. Moreover, within political and economic conditions that do not favour miners, *gombiro* practices provide them with alternative forms of access and power. A *gweja* may know how to mine, but a *gombiro* knows how to find gold.

Belonging to Fenda

Zimbabwean miners find themselves entangled in a web of social ties. *Communiterias*, land owners, and gold buyers, in various ways, influence the practices and roles of miners. They make impositions upon gold miners that define the actual outcomes of their mining practices. Furthermore, their exchanges define the ecological role of miners by altering the amount of labour and risk necessary. Operating within a gold economy, they all depend on the continuing search for gold in Fenda for their own survival. Therefore, these actors all encounter their own issues of belonging and access in Fenda. As much as it seems that some roles have slight advantage over others, they also live within political and economic circumstances that limit and reconfigure their livelihoods and life projects.

Miners use identities as a way of recognising and understanding their social roles and practices. By identifying as *gwejas*, miners refer to the hard work and suffering that they have invested into the land as miners. This physical and

symbolic input gives them access to a sense of belonging. However, *gombiros* exist as a complementary identity and allows miners to engage in practices that *gwejas* cannot. It gives miners an outlet to frame their treatment of other miners in times of necessity. Furthermore, with this particular political ecology, identifying as *gwejas* and *gombiros* is a form of political practice. These different identities allow miners to access positions of authority or control over other actors. More importantly, identities are self-conscious projects for miners who articulate their roles in Fenda to larger political and economic systems.

Chapter 5: Golden Ecologies

My thesis has explored the ways in which Zimbabwean artisanal gold miners operate in their environments through their particular practices and understanding. I used the reflexive concerns of anthropology and the issues of power and access within political ecology as guidelines for analysing miners' social relationships. Within this framing, their narratives illustrated their particular understandings and motivations for continuing in Fenda. Each segment related the significance of their narratives to the overall project of understanding miners' history, practices, and experiences. Further, their narratives also refer to their continuing links—both material and imagined—to Zimbabwe. This form of analysis was also turned to their environmental and social relationships. Through their social relationships with other actors in Fenda, miners negotiate forms of access and power. Finally, I focused on identities as forms of political practice that tie miners to their sense of belonging in Fenda and to their ecological practices. Furthermore, these identities allow miners to assert claims over access and control of mines.

My methods structured the outcomes of my ethnographic experience, and therefore the findings within this thesis. Through participant-observation and my various forms of interviews, I found that my research participants and I tacitly negotiated our interactions. Over time, we formed bonds that went beyond the relationship of a researcher and miner, and into friendships. In turn, this led to productive interviews based on trust and understanding. I also encountered several limitations within my field work, such as the timing, my linguistic abilities,

and my roles within Fenda. However, they did not reduce the richness of the ethnographic experience, and, in a way, forced me to reflect on my experiences and role within my own ethnographic research and writing.

Political Economy of Migration

Because of my political ecological approach to understanding artisanal gold mining, I referred to the political economy of migration between Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The changing national contexts forced both Zimbabweans and Mozambicans to rely on the border at different historical conjunctures as a means to extend their livelihood opportunities. This trend extends from the colonial era up until today.

Labour migration along the Zimbabwean-Mozambican border has been occurring since the inception of the border during the colonial period. The border drew an arbitrary political institution that split communities on both sides. However, it also produced dissimilar political economic conditions on either side that Mozambicans and Zimbabweans have exploited over time. In earlier periods, a quickly industrialising Southern Rhodesia actively sought out wage labourers from surrounding countries to work on farms and in factories. For Mozambicans, working in these labour conditions was preferable to the forced labour prevalent under colonial Portuguese rule. This led to many young Mozambican men crossing over into Southern Rhodesia through formal and informal means.

The onset of independence struggles saw the trend of labour migration shift to displacement. Rebellions against colonial powers produced long drawn-out wars. During this period, hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans sought

sanctuary over the border to escape from the fighting. After gaining independence, Mozambique quickly moved into a civil war between the ruling party, FRELIMO, and foreign-sponsored guerrilla forces, RENAMO. This also led to a long and violent affair, which displaced many more Mozambicans across to Zimbabwe. This period saw large amounts of people utilise the border as an option to avoid fighting, and also the economic and political uncertainty that it brings.

Also in the 1980s, Mozambique adopted structural adjustment policies under the directive of the IMF and World Bank. Later, in the 1990s, the Zimbabwean government designed and implemented its own set of structural adjustment policies. These new nation-states required drastic action to service their increasing debts. However, the neo-liberal policies eroded public structures and social services leading people into informal practices. This process of informalisation saw people move into increasingly precarious livelihoods to capture available opportunities. People were pushed into the informal sectors and exploited the different economic conditions in Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

After 2000, Mozambique continued on this trend of market liberalisation. This led to misleading figures of growth and development, while the ability of the peasant and working classes to match these changes continued to wane. In Zimbabwe, political violence intersected with these economic changes in disastrous ways. The ruling ZANU(PF) moved quickly to mitigate the quick rise of the opposing MDC party through vote-rigging and violence against their supporters. The populist land-reform programme produced large-scale changes

across the Zimbabwean countryside as white-owned farms became the targets for economic redistribution. In the cities, the government initiatives, Operation Murambatsvina and Operation Dzikisa Mutenga, damaged Zimbabwean livelihoods and homes. Further, this was compounded when the economic crisis reached a peak with the hyper-inflation crisis. The rapid devaluation of the currency erased the ability for people to meet their basic needs. During this period, an ever increasing number of people entered into informal practices, left Zimbabwe, or did both. This period also saw the rise of Zimbabwean miners in Mozambique as they sought ways to extend their livelihoods within this particularly difficult period.

Extending Livelihoods

Zimbabwean miners' narratives reflect their continued attachments to Zimbabwe and Fenda. The effects of displacement and the political economic changes seen at the national scale significantly altered their abilities to pursue their life projects. However, Zimbabweans have been resilient in diversifying their livelihoods and stretching the boundaries of their social lives. Through their movements across the border, I argue that miners are involved in their own scale-making projects as they continue to redefine the limits of the Zimbabwean national economy. The informal practices of miners in Mozambique support their continuing social lives and life projects in Zimbabwe.

Many Zimbabwean miners in Fenda were already involved in informal economies before deciding to come to Fenda. They found ways to "get by" while still in Zimbabwe. While in Fenda, their continuing attachment to informal

practices demonstrates the re-orientation of the Zimbabwe economy into these forms of work. Even though these Zimbabweans work as miners in Mozambique, they continued to imagine future possibilities in Zimbabwe. To this end, they continue in material and nonmaterial exchanges that maintain their social relationships in Zimbabwe. Many miners also plan to use their earnings to continue on life projects, such as education. Therefore, they do not see mining as a goal in itself, but as a means to support their ability to work on their own life goals.

Border-jumping constitutes Zimbabweans' practice of linking Fenda with Zimbabwe. They take advantage of the differing conditions on either side of the border to enhance their livelihood strategies. Furthermore, they also continue to use the historic crossings between the neighbouring countries, such as between the communities of Penhalonga and Nyaronga. The volume and frequency of people moving to and from this area attests to its popularity among Zimbabweans and Mozambicans. The experience of border-jumping is, understandably, unnerving for the first-time because of the threat of arrest and violence from border guards. However, savvy and experienced migrants rely on bribes to ease their passage through.

While in Fenda, miners initiate their own informal practices. Organising themselves into work syndicates, miners share the risks and profits of mining. Furthermore, these work groups also enable the socialisation of new miners through the sharing of mining knowledge. Because syndicates spend such long periods of time together, miners learn from observing each other's practices.

However, working in the mines is no easy task, as many of them endure dangerous conditions underground. The poor living conditions above ground also reflect the difficulties of informal mining activities.

The cumulative effects of mining these environments have been disastrous in terms of degrading its future land use. This is not something miners have missed. They also recognise that their labour has reshaped the surface by moving the earth bit by bit. They accept their position and acknowledge that this is one of their only recourses given their unequal status within the Zimbabwean and local economy. However, they counter that their work is necessary for the sake of the local economy. But with these degrading environmental conditions and the rumours of gold exhaustion, the mining activity in Fenda has fallen dramatically. The number of miners has dwindled since 2010, and now only a few hundred remain. Remaining miners commented that they did not see future opportunities in Fenda as they prepared to leave as well. This resulting decreasing in mining activity further reduces the amount of vendors, and gold buyers coming as well. As the local gold mining boom begins to unravel, the unstable foundations of an informal economy are exposed.

Social Mining

Within their particular social roles, miners are embedded within relationships of power and negotiation with other actors within the mining economy. Through these relationships, miners negotiate access to the area, and the mining practices. With their own interests in mind, land owners, gold buyers, and *communitarias* make demands upon miners and use different methods to

control the labour of miners. The role of *communiterias* in Fenda gives them the authority to mediate disputes between miners and land owners. *Communiterias* often abuse their position to take advantage of both miners and land owners. They impose arbitrary penalties upon miners, which miners have come to despise. Further, miners do not always acquiesce and, in some cases, dispute with the *communiterias*. In a position of more privilege, land owners operate as the main beneficiaries the mining activity. They negotiate access with miners for a fee, and also have the ability to direct and organise mining activity. However, some land owners do not retain absolute control over their fields and can lose out to miners and *communiterias*. In a separate realm of access, gold buyers link the mining activities in Fenda to larger gold markets. Through their own practices, they bring in foreign currency to purchase gold straight from the miners. However, buyers negotiate hard bargains with miners who are quick to sell their gold findings at the end of the day. Their ability to control access to these wider markets encourages a relationship of mistrust between them and miners. Common to all of these actors are the constraints of their particular roles to achieve their own access and belonging within Fenda, and are subject to the same political economic conditions that structure their livelihoods.

To justify their means of gaining access, miners identify as *gwejas* and *gombiros* to understand their mining practices. Through these roles, miners attach their understandings and practices to this particular ecology. Miners recognised themselves as *gwejas* through their feelings of freedom and hard work. These emotive understandings tie miners to their mining practices. As a

consequence, these feelings and understandings also lead to a sense of entitlement over Mozambican miners who Zimbabwean miners see as lazy, fearful, and uneducated. Therefore, Zimbabwean miners also understand themselves as mentors for Mozambicans who require education in “proper” mining practices. Because of their role, Zimbabwean *gwejas* belong in Fenda. However, miners also engage in shady practices. Referred to as *gombiros*, these are miners who act as liars, cheaters and bullies. They engage in other practices that take advantage of their fellow miners. However, at the same time, miners recognise the necessity of these practices as they all, in one way or another, engage in these practices. Even though, miners can operate as both, they are still wary of others as *gombiros* and act accordingly to protect their mines from *gombiro* practices. To this end, trust is a rarer commodity in Fenda than gold. Therefore, *gombiros* exist in, but do not belong to Fenda.

Anthropological Belonging

When I first started, I did not know any miners, so I kept to myself. Quietly, I strolled through the market and sat by myself along the river banks. I was annoyed when miners would not believe me when I told them I was a university student and continued to insist that I buy their gold. However, reflecting on that period, I can see why they treated me as a gold buyer. I was a relatively wealthy foreigner, spoke strictly English, and was mobile. Even though I was not interested in buying gold, I acted like a gold buyer and people understood me as such. As my fieldwork moved forward, people began to recognise me in other ways. I showed up daily in local transport with community members and miners. I

spent long periods speaking with miners in the fields. I ate with the miners during their breaks. More, importantly, I worked with the miners. I willingly went into mines and observed miners at work. My hair brushed the earth away as I crawled through tunnels, and my clothes and skin bore the same red-orange earth. My friends began referring to me as a *gweja* jokingly, but only because I began acting like one. A researcher does not belong in Fenda because people simply do not recognise the role. However, they do know gold buyers and *gwejas* when they see them. As my actions changed, so did my social and ecological roles through the way people thought of, and treated me. Reflecting on my research, my participant-observation offered me much more than building “rapport”: it allowed me to belong in Fenda.

However, my belonging was contingent upon my relationship to my research participants and other actors within Fenda. Through our daily exchanges, I negotiated my role with them and other actors within Fenda. However, as the area is slowly abandoned, so slowly are my attachments and understandings of the area. Zimbabwean miners experience a similar form of disentanglement with the landscape. Their understanding of their roles and belonging shift as old miners leave and new ones come along. Therefore, the particular ecologies in Fenda reflect the fleeting nature of belonging. As the population within Fenda dwindles, miners find themselves stretched again. Some might find their way back in Zimbabwe. However, I believe that many more will follow these mining booms. As the political and economic structures within

Zimbabwe remain uncertain, Zimbabweans will certainly continue to operate on both sides of the border.

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