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GOLD, POLITICS AND VIOLENCE: ARTISANAL GOLD MINING IN KWEKWE CITY, 1980-2022

BY

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2433013

THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE PARTIAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN HISTORY

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

SUPERVISORS: PROF. MUCHAPARARA MUSEMWA AND DR DINEO SKOSANA

Declaration

1) I, Tilda Nkomo, declare that this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at the University of the Witwatersrand;

2) I declare that the thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.

3) I declare that the thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signature

Date

28-08-2023

ABSTRACT

The study sought to reveal the murky, multidirectional and dynamic political, economic and socio-cultural exchanges that have often followed 'informalisation' of natural resource extraction in Zimbabwe. It considered how artisanal mining became a source of everyday social, political and economic contestations. In an economy that is in crisis, and a political terrain characterised by state-sponsored violence, persistent electioneering mode, politics of patronage, artisanal mining – which has directly and indirectly drawn thousands of people – has created new ideas for both the political elite and the general populace about political survival, basic economic sustenance and accumulation. It demonstrated that, for instance, politicians used artisanal mining for vote mobilisation whereas, artisanal miners needed politicians for access to the mines and related activities. As a result, the line between politicians and artisanal miners was increasingly blurred; artisanal mining was now a source of income not only to direct participants but has also benefited downstream formal and informal activities such as vending, transportation, security, among others. Building on literature that has focused on Southern Africa and other regions of the continent, the study considered how artisanal mining has contributed to both building and destroying various aspects of Zimbabwe's wider society: the growth of new entrepreneurs, the transformation of the rural economy, the destruction of the environment, increased political and non-political violence, among other consequences. It examined everyday interactions between economic, social and political forces, with particular focus on the grassroots.

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This project would have gone nowhere without the help of numerous artisanal and people in other informal sectors who took the time to explain the lives, operations, and links between artisanal gold mining, politics, and violence. I appreciate their support.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family for their moral and spiritual support. I am particularly forever grateful to my inner circle, my mother, brothers and sisters in law. May the almighty God bless you!

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late Father, Madoda Crunnel Nkomo, who always desired academic success for his children. May his cherished soul rest in eternal peace.

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ACRONYMS

ASGM	Artisanal and Small Scale Gold Miners
CCC	Citizens Coalition for Change
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
EMA	Environmental Management Agency
FLRP	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NLHA	Native Land Husbandry Act
NPF	National Patriotic Front
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe National Union Patriotic Front

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

This study examined the violence that characterised everyday life and political contestations in the artisanal and small-scale gold mining (hereafter ASGM) dominated town of Kwekwe in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe. It argued that ASGM presented new dimensions to the violent politics that predominated in Zimbabwe since the turn of the millennium. Unlike state-centred analyses that emphasised the state's capacity to mobilise instruments of forces such as the army, police and ruling-party militias in order to maintain its hegemony, this study sought to demonstrate the manifestation of violence in everyday life (e.g., contests between miners, or between miners and non-mining constituents), sometimes state-sponsored, occasionally independent of the state, and at other times ambiguous and difficult to define. However, the study acknowledged the interconnectedness of the different dimensions of the violence.

Starting from the year 2000, a new genre of violence emerged on the Zimbabwean political landscape, as the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) faced powerful opposition politics that really threatened its hold on power.[1] In order to ward off the hostile forces and create new political constituencies, the ruling party went beyond the deployment of the usual state security apparatuses, and also pursued unconventional means such as supporting and nurturing the informal economic sectors of which ASGM is one of the significant parts.[2] In this case, there was a transactional affair between ZANU-PF and those involved in ASGM, whereby the latter harvested political support for the ruling party in exchange for its patronage which largely involved accessing the otherwise illegal gold mining and related activities. Considering the growing support base of the opposition, all forms of violence – physical, symbolic, environmental, etc. – were deployed in service of the ruling ZANU-PF and the state.

[1] In quick succession, and for the first time, ZANU PF suffered severe electoral defeats in parliamentary elections where it conceded 57 seats to a newly formed Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in June 2000, and only won by a narrow margin in a disputed 2002 presidential election.

[2] Informal economic sectors that ZANU-PF sought to take advantage of include street-side vendors, public transport touts among others whose numbers were growing (as employment rates plummeted) due to the declining economic situation.

Historical background and context

Kwekwe, called Que Que before independence, is a small mining city at the geographical heart of Zimbabwe, located in the country's Midlands Province. It is roughly 215 kilometres away from the capital city of Harare to the north-east and 227 kilometres from the second capital of Bulawayo to the south-west.[3] The history of its establishment can be traced back to the early 1890s, the years in which Zimbabwe was invaded and then colonised by mainly British fortune hunters who were led by Cecil John Rhodes and his British South Africa Company (BSAC). Their main motivation for colonisation was the quest for a second gold reef of a magnitude similar to the one discovered on the South African Witwatersrand in 1886.[4] When the BSAC arrived, age-old gold mining by local people was already widespread across the Zimbabwean plateau.[5] When they could not find the expected amount of gold, the BSAC and many other fortune seekers who followed it were forced to seek other alternative opportunities such as agriculture.[6] By the end of British colonial and settler rule in 1980, besides a strong agricultural sector, the country's economy was dominated by scattered operations of large-scale industrial mining.

Kwekwe district in general, and the city in particular, lay at the centre of the colony's mining economy. The city was built on what is termed the 'green belt', that is, greenish coloured (sometimes associated with viable agricultural production) and gold-rich volcanic-sedimentary formations.[7] Not far from the green belt is the Great Dyke, another mineral rich geological feature which touches Kwekwe's fringes and also cuts across Zimbabwe from the north to the south.[8] The Great Dyke has more than ten known extractable minerals deposits that include gold, platinum, chrome, nickel, mica, and asbestos, among others. Kwekwe, as such, is located in an area that has an abundance of minerals, and overlain by an equally rich fertile brown and reddish clay loam soil which made it an ideal location for a thriving mining and agriculture economy.

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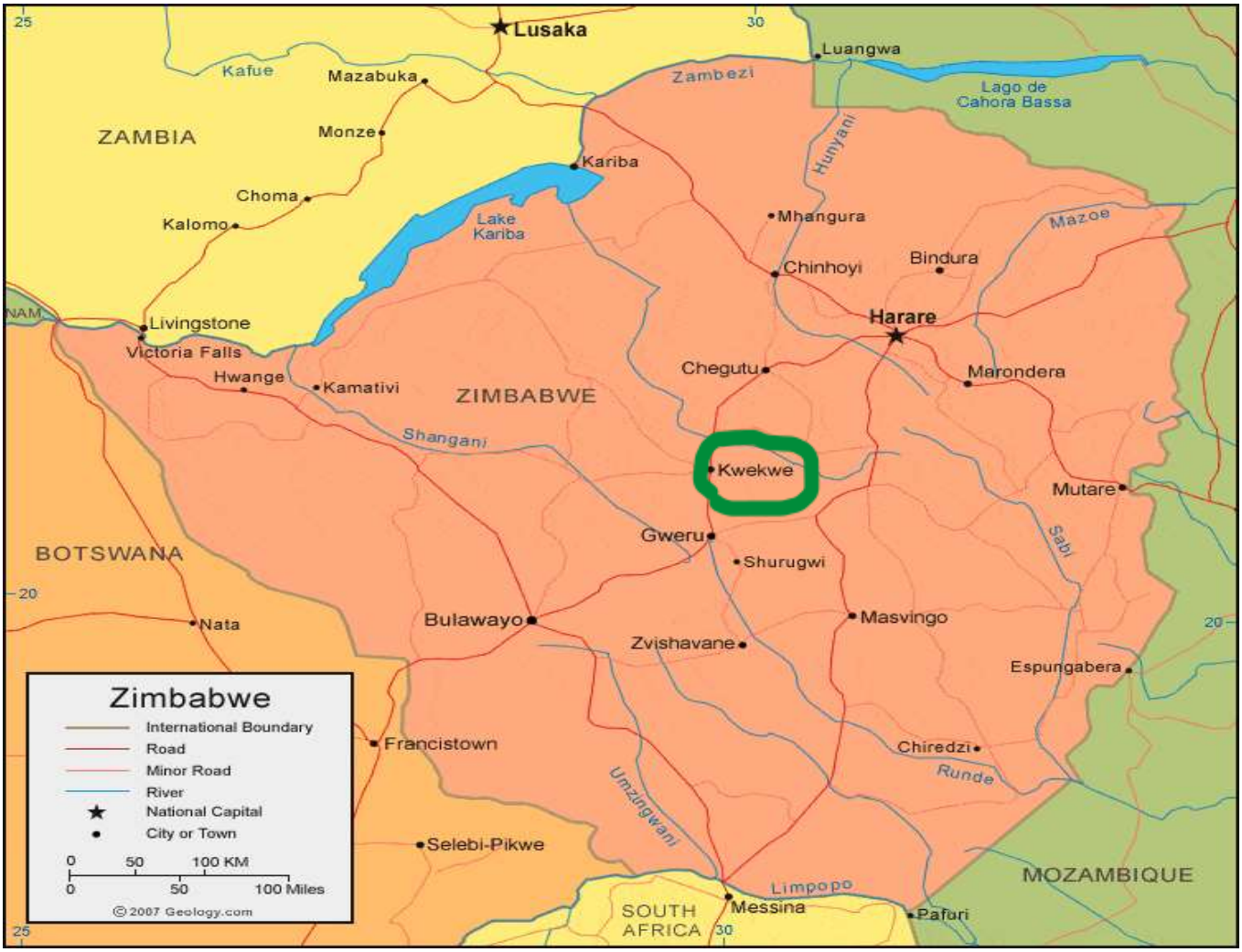
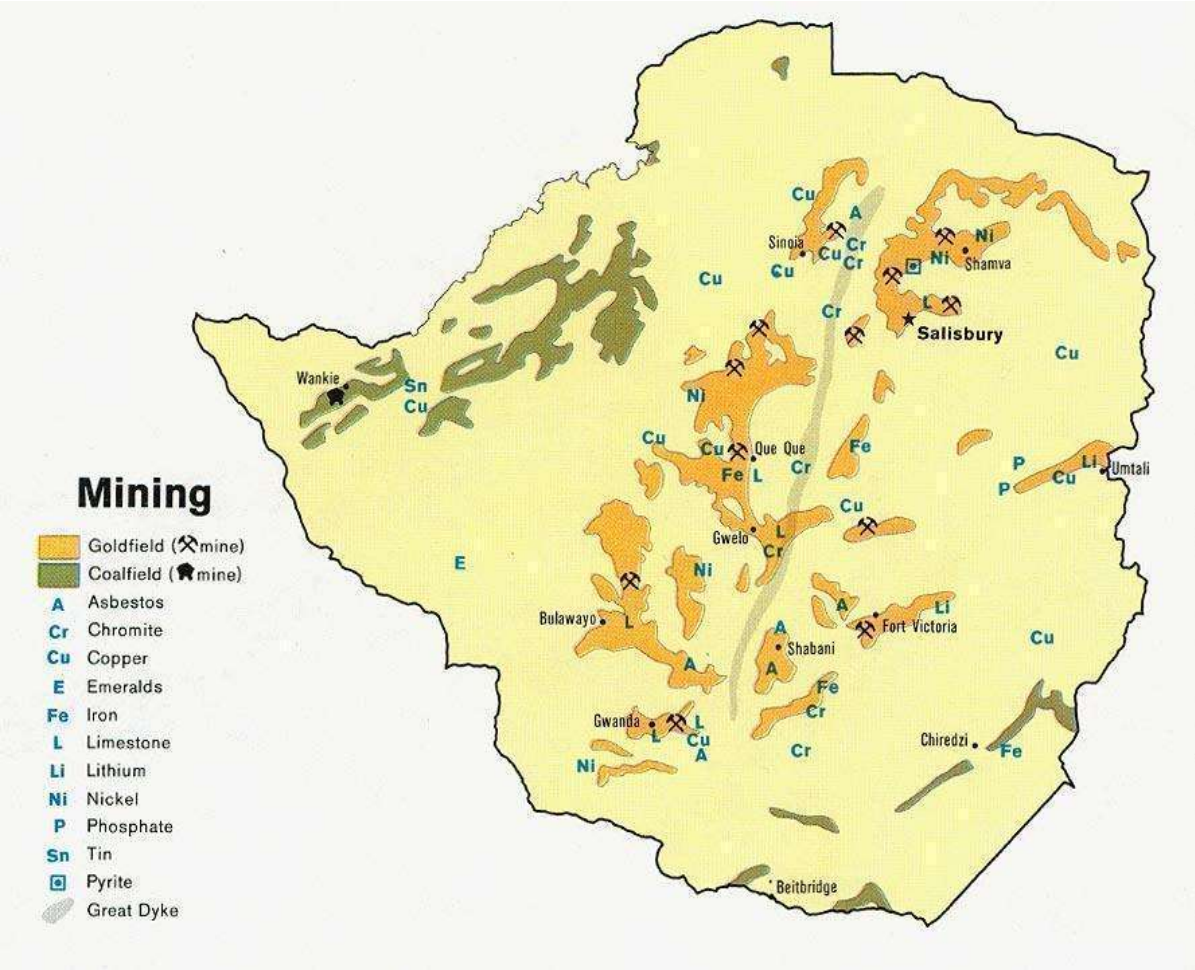
[3] See Map in Appendix 1.
[4] S. Mawowa, "Political economy of crisis, mining and accumulation in Zimbabwe: Evidence from the Chegutu Mhondoro area", *PhD dissertation*, University of KwaZulu- Natal, 2013, p. 42.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] P. Buchholz et al., "Granite-hosted gold mineralization in the Midlands greenstone belt: A new type of low-grade gold deposit in Zimbabwe", *Mineralium deposita*, Vol. 33, No. 5, 1998, pp. 437–60.
[8] See Appendix 2.

Appendix 1:



Zimbabwe Map and Satellite Image (geology.com) (Kwekwe circled in Green) (Accessed 30 August 2021)

Appendix 2:



Rhodesian Map showing the great dyke and its mineral deposits in different towns of Zimbabwe https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/south_rhodesiamine_1979 (Accessed 30 August 2021).

As of 2021, Kwekwe and surrounding areas had an estimated population of 99,149 people.[9] Although a sizeable part of the population can be considered 'local', that is born and bred in Kwekwe, recent years have seen many other people streaming into the area from all over Zimbabwe, in search of gold and other opportunities linked to mining. Most of the population is comprised of the ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English speakers (Zimbabwe's three major languages), but there are many other ethnolinguistic groups such as the ChiChewa, TshiVenda and SiNambya among others. However, these population groups cannot be seen as discrete because people can and do belong to many ethnolinguistic groups at the same time, thus making it difficult to put strict distinguishing lines among them. Many of the people in the district are involved in ASGM in either direct or indirect ways. One of the biggest reasons for this is the high rate of formal unemployment which is estimated to be 88%. Direct employment is obtained through entering and excavating gold trenches, panning for gold, and buying and selling gold, among other related activities. Indirectly, it is by giving services to miners such as sex, food, transportation, religion, and many others.

It is young men, from teenage ages to mid-life ages who are mainly found at the rock-face, chiselling, drilling and dynamiting for gold ore. Women are usually relegated to on-surface tasks such as panning on river-beds, surface mining, and providing aforementioned services to the mining community – which are, generally speaking, less lucrative activities compared to working on the rock face. Worth mentioning is that like most informally organised sectors, the ASGM in Kwekwe is still difficult to tabulate because of what historian Jennifer Hinton calls a "visibility crisis" in the sector, whereby many individuals and institutions still struggle to see or accept its relevance in the broader economy, politics and society and therefore give it very little, or derisive attention, in official writings and pronouncements.[10] As a consequence, specific statistical data such as provided in mainstream media, and official documents is speculation, yet simple observations and listening to stories on the ground, as will be one of this study's objectives, can testify to ASGM's extensiveness and importance in shaping Zimbabwe's recent (post-2000s) history.

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[9] Population of Cities in Zimbabwe (2021) (worldpopulationreview.com) (Accessed 23 August 2021)
[10] J. Hinton, "Gender differentiated impacts and benefits of artisanal mining: Engendering pathways out of poverty: A case study in Katwe Kabotooro town council, Uganda," *PhD dissertation*, University of British Columbia, 2011.

The rise of ASGM in post-independence Zimbabwe

In 1980, Zimbabwe gained its independence from 90 years of British colonial rule. The Robert Mugabe-led ZANU-PF government took over from the settler-colonial Rhodesian Front regime amidst high expectations for social, political and economic reforms from the black majority. In spite of the initial signs of progress whereby the new government invested massively in social services such as education and health, the euphoria soon suffered fatigue.[11] By the end of the 1980s transitioning into the 1990s there emerged widespread voices of discontent against growing authoritarianism, a sluggish economy and a deteriorating social welfare system, among other concerns.[12] The disgruntlement continued throughout the 1990s and was largely voiced by civil society movements, white farmers, students, trade unions and landless black Zimbabweans. A direct manifestation of these dissenting voices against ZANU-PF's rule was the emergence of many new political parties such as the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) led by Edgar Tekere in 1990, Zimbabwe Union of Democrats led by Margaret Dongo in 1995, and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) led by Morgan Tsvangirai in 1999.[13] Trade unions and civil society organisations such as the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), the Zimbabwe National Students' Union (ZINASU) and National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) became increasingly vocal and militant.[14] However, it is the emergence of the MDC as a formidable opposition party in 1999 that rattled ZANU-PF and radically transformed the nature and substance of politics in Zimbabwe.

There were many key social, economic and political initiatives that symbolised a country sliding into crisis. The most significant was the adoption of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund's Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1991. To many Zimbabweans, instead of alleviating their plight, the ESAPs worsened their predicament. Historian Alois Mlambo lamented the fact that under the programme Zimbabwe's inflation spiked, unemployment worsened, state interventions in social infrastructures and services declined,

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[11] J. Muzondidya, "From buoyancy to crisis, 1980-97", in B. Raftopoulos and A. Mlambo, (eds.), *Becoming Zimbabwe: A history from the pre-colonial period to 2008*, Harare: Weaver press, 2008, p. 168.

[12] J. Muzondidya, "Zimbabwe's failed transitions? An analysis of the challenges and complexities in Zimbabwe's transition to democracy in the post-2000 period", in T. Murithi and A. Mawadza (eds.), *Zimbabwe in transition: A view from within*, Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2011, p. 8.

[13] A. S. Mlambo, *A history of Zimbabwe*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2014, p. 204.

[14] B. Raftopoulos, "The crisis in Zimbabwe, 1998-2008", in B. Raftopoulos and A. Mlambo, (eds.), *Becoming Zimbabwe: A history from the pre-colonial period to 2008*, Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2009, p. 202.

leaving many Zimbabweans socially and economically exposed. In the industrial and mining town of Kwekwe, the site that this study seeks to investigate, the effects of a struggling economy were clear. Large state-owned enterprises such as the Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Company (ZISCO), National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ), Zimbabwe United Passengers Company (ZUPCO), and others, retrenched thousands of workers in Zimbabwe as a whole, yet the impact was grave in places like Kwekwe where people had until then relied on formal employment for their livelihoods. The effects of the retrenchments were felt in other downstream industries and the wider economy, as the Zimbabwean currency weakened, inflation increased and access to foreign currency became difficult. For economic sectors that are heavily dependent on access to foreign currency and markets such as the mining, the economic decline increased the cost of operations. In Kwekwe, therefore, many gold mines downgraded their operational capacities or completely shut down. Tiger Reef mine, Globe and Phoenix mine, Gaika Mine, Unit Mine, Collision mine, Empress Mine, and dozens of others were affected. In an environment of joblessness, retrenchments, a shrinking economy, in addition to the thousands of schools, colleges and universities graduates joining the job market every year, it is unsurprising that there was a phenomenal growth of informal and illegal economic activities.

It is also important to note that, however, mining more or less similar to ASGM was happening during the early days of colonial rule, as "small [gold] workings" made up 70 percent of the country's mines in 1908.[15] After 1918, a structural change in the gold mining industry which saw the growing importance of large producers and the near-eclipse of medium-sized mines, occurred.[16] This entailed sharp increases in labour requirements for the mining industry. Between 1920 and 1930 Africans in the reserves were put under harsh conditions by the colonial government.[17] For instance, they were made to pay a lot of taxes in cash and also, they were pushed into reserves with less fertile land. The doubling of hut tax in 1904, lifted the African contribution to state revenues to 41 percent, followed by a spate of fresh levies and taxes between 1908 and 1914.[18] In 1909, Africans living on so called unalienated land had to pay rent to the Chartered

[15] https://www.pactworld.org/library/golden-opportunity-artisanal-and-small-scale-gold-mining-zimbabwe (Accessed 1 September 2021)
[16] I. R. Phimister, "Gold mining in Southern Rhodesia 1919/1953", *The Rhodesian Journal of Economics*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1976, p. 21.
[17] Ibid.
[18] I. R. Phimister, *Capital and class in Zimbabwe 1890 – 1948, Seminar paper* No. 50, University of Zimbabwe, Department of History, 6 October 1980.

Company; even higher fees were exacted from the tenants of white farmers; dog tax was introduced in 1912; and in 1914 an Ordinance made cattle dipping, at 1 to 2shillings per head, compulsory 'in any area where this was the wish of the majority of (white) farmers'.[19] By 1923 three-quarters of all African-owned, cattle were being dipped adding yet again to the burdens of the black peasantry and working class.[20] Under the various control and levy acts of the 1930s, African cattle owners and maize growers were manipulated and taxed to subsidise the earnings of white ranchers and farmers.[21] The Cattle Levy Acts of 1931 and 1934 imposed a 2s. 6d. levy on the slaughter of all cattle for domestic consumption in order to pay a bounty subsidising exports almost -exclusively owned by whites. Because the levy proved difficult to collect, an additional tax per head on all cattle was introduced in 1934.[22] This left Africans with no choice but to go and search for employment in the urban areas for survival. More Africans in the urban areas meant the growth of commercial mining, agriculture and the manufacturing industries. Between 1946 and 1952, agriculture and mining were the largest commercial employers in the colony. Hence by 1988 the "small workings" had been replaced by large-scale industrial mining and reduced to only 20 percent of gold production in the country.[23] The surge in informal mining sector activities at the end of the 1990s and in the early 2000s in Kwekwe was, among other things, a consequence of the changing politics and economic character of the country.[24]

ASGM and the 1990s/2000s socio-political and economic crises

While ASGM was a trickle in the 1990s, there was a sudden mass surge of numbers entering this mining activity from the year 2000. This rush, which instantly assumed a free for all character, was mainly prompted by the *Third Chimurenga* – a nationalist and ideological trope conveniently adopted by the ZANU PF government in the face of stiff opposition challenge in 2000. The Third

[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid
[22] Ibid.
[23] I. R. Phimister, "Gold mining in Southern Rhodesia 1919/1953", *The Rhodesian Journal of Economics*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1976, p. 21.
[24] The strain on the Zimbabwean economy was also exacerbated by the government's reactive and controversial political and economic decisions. For example, in 1997 the veterans of Zimbabwe's independence war were given an unbudgeted pay out of Z$ 50.000.00 each as compensation which led the Zimbabwean dollar to fall by 70 percent in value on what is now known as 'black Friday'. Another issue was Zimbabwe's participation in the expensive wars of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which was a huge drain on the fiscus see P. Bond, "Zimbabwe's hide and seek with the IMF: imperialism, nationalism & the South African proxy", *Review of African Political Economy* Vol. 32, No. 106, 2005, p. 613.

Chimurenga was supposedly a process to complete the struggle for independence from settler-colonial domination, and it was underpinned by the idea that black Zimbabweans had to reclaim their social and economic resources that had for long been in the hands of 'foreigners' and the white minority. Amongst the major targets for redressing the colonial wrongs were the redistribution of agricultural lands and mineral resources. Termed 'invasions' by critics and 'restitution' by supporters, the Third Chimurenga for the major part was *jambanja*, a ChiShona term that means 'politics of chaos' and violence.[25] While the Third Chimurenga created thousands of 'new' farmers and land owners, it also triggered a rapid emergence of new classes of mine owners, miners, and related dealers who operated individually, as small groups or small-scale operators. They 'invaded' former large-scale mines, rejuvenated old ones, and (re)discovered new mining claims. [26] These dynamics can be placed in what agrarian studies scholar Sam Moyo saw as the "liberation" of natural resources which were formerly monopolised by a privileged white minority.[27]

As elsewhere across the country, in Kwekwe the new political situation witnessed bouts of violence, in its various dimensions and proportions, pervading most aspects of politics and everyday life of the town. The violence hinged on the contestation for both access to gold mining and political considerations. This study, therefore, seeks to explore how violence was perpetrated from above (the state) and from below by those participating in ASGM and other ordinary citizens. The interconnectedness of gold, violence and politics manifested clearly on Kwekwe's mines such as Gaika and Globe-&-Phoenix mines where thousands who sought to extract gold ore had their access controlled in a nakedly partisan manner by the state and ruling party. Suspected opposition elements were barred from participating in mining activities as they were deemed 'counter-revolutionary', 'sell-outs' and 'agents of imperialism' in the context of the Third Chimurenga.[28] Grateful to the ruling party for being allowed access to the resources, constituencies such as ordinary miners were often ready to perpetrate violence, coercion and intimidation for the benefit of ZANU PF which they now deemed their economic saviour. But sometimes the violence would

[25] I. Scoones, "Zimbabwe's land reform: New political dynamics in the countryside." *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 42, No. 144, 2015, pp. 190-205; C. Buckle, *African Tears: The Zimbabwe land invasions*, Johannesburg: Convos-Day Books, 2002.
[26] J. Chaumba, et al., "From jambanja to planning: The reassertion of technocracy in land reform in south-eastern Zimbabwe?" *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 2003, pp. 533-554.
[27] S. Moyo "Three decades of agrarian reform in Zimbabwe", *Journal of peasant studies*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 2011, p. 531.
[28] As attested by ethnographic observations, newspaper reports and informal interviews.

have little or no central state presence as artisanal miners engaged in vicious contests for gold resources and positions in society. Sometimes the miners and their communities organised themselves into groups ranging from fifteen to one hundred.[29] They would employ both physical and symbolic violence to deter and elbow out rivals in tussles that usually led to serious injuries, death, displacement, damage to property, the environment, among other consequences. While sometimes this violence seemed to occur independent of the state, it is the most powerful artisanal miners' propensity to the use of violence that the state sought to harness and deploy against its political opponents, especially in the MDC, as has been demonstrated by virtually all elections in Kwekwe since the turn of the new millennium. This study will seek to establish the extent to which such violence defined the path of politics at a local level in Kwekwe since the 2000s. In Zimbabwe, artisanal and small-scale mining goes beyond mere economic terms; it is decidedly political. In Kwekwe all key bureaucrats and politicians are in one way or the other connected to ASGM. Combined, these and other unique characteristics – social, political and economic – render ASGM and associated dynamics a fertile ground for scholarly inquiry.[30]

Aims and objectives

Using the case of Kwekwe, the study deploys the Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining context to examine the different dimensions of local (community) level and national level violence and how they manifest in the everyday social and political practices of contemporary Zimbabwean society. It takes as its main objective investigating the extent to which violence shaped the ASGM sector Furthermore, the study explores the relations and interactions that existed between various actors, including individual miners, ASGM groups, political parties, and the Zimbabwean state, and how were they shaped, or were themselves shaped, by violence and politics. It also shows how violence changed over time and place and shaped everyday social and political interactions and practices since the year 2000 in the city of Kwekwe.

[29]https://www.theafricareport.com/54015/zimbabwes-artisanal-mines-theres-no-real-form-of-law-and-order-piers-pigou/(Accessed 1 March 2023), The London School of Economics and Political Science, *Sustainability Impact Assessment in Support of Negotiations with Partner Countries in Eastern and Southern Africa in view of Deepening the Existing Interim Economic Partnership Agreement,* Mining Case Study 18, January 2021https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2021/march/tradoc_159466.pdf (Accessed 1 March 2023)

[30] *The Midlands Observer*, 11 April 2014; *The Midlands Observer*, 29 September 2017; *The* Midlands *Observer*, 3 July 2009.

Rationale

Over the years, ASGM has attracted substantial scholarly attention. The analyses have considered various aspects, but the dominant views have been about ASGM's links to poverty, its links to public health (e.g., its connections to the spread of HIV and AIDS), its impacts on the environment, and how it has driven primitive state accumulation of resources from the mining areas.[31] Accorded less attention has been the issue of violence. Among the few exceptions are historians Nyamunda and Mukwambo, and sociologist Katsaura who have examined violence perpetrated by the central state in its bid to assert control and hegemony in mineral rich places. These authors concentrated on the politics of resource-access during an intense diamond rush that occurred between 2006 and 2010 at Marange Diamond fields in eastern Zimbabwe. The state portrays artisanal mining and the state's reaction (primarily the coercive usurpation of minerals) as an event. This study, however, analysed artisanal mining, as it happens in gold mining regions, as a life-long transition of society's everyday life aspirations and politics. [32]

By considering the 'everyday' violence in the analysis of ASGM, this study embraces the idea that violence can also be perpetrated on the natural environment.[33] Scholars have considered the impact of artisanal mining, but have largely gone no further than that. This study seeks to examine the extent to which the state's and artisanal miners' collusion can be implicated in such processes as river siltation, deforestations, destruction of the habitats of many life species, etc. State institutions and agencies such as the Environmental Management Authority, traditional leaders (chiefs and

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[31] G. Hilson, "Small-scale mining and its socio-economic impact in developing countries", *Natural Resource Forum*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 2002, pp. 3-13; G. Hilson and C. Potter "Why is illegal gold mining activity so ubiquitous in rural Ghana?", *African Development Review*, Vol. 15, No. 2-3, 2003, pp. 237-270; G. Hilson and C. Garforth "Agricultural poverty and Southern Ghana," *Population Research and Policy Review*, Vol. 31, No. 3, 2012, pp. 435-464; P. J. Kamlongera, "Making the poor 'poorer' or alleviating poverty? Artisanal mining livelihoods in rural Malawi," *Journal of International Development*, Vol. 23, No. 8, 2011, 1128-1139; J. Gamu et al., "Extractive industries and poverty: A review of recent findings and linkage mechanisms", *The Extractive Industries and Society*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2015, pp. 162-176.

[32] See G. Mkodzongi, "The rise of 'Mashurugwi' machete gangs and violent conflicts in Zimbabwe's artisanal and small-scale gold mining sector", *The Extractive Industries and Society*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2020, pp. 1480-1489; D. Towriss, "Buying loyalty: Zimbabwe's Marange diamonds", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2013, pp. 99-117; S. Mawowa, The political economy of artisanal and small-scale gold mining in central Zimbabwe, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 4, pp. 921-936.

[33] D. Bhebhe, et al., "Socio-environmental damage, a looming facet of illegal gold panning: A case study of the illegal gold panners of Gwanda district, Zimbabwe", *Disaster Advances*, Vol. 6, No. 10, 2013, pp. 70-76; S. Ncube-Phiri et al, "Artisanal small-scale mining: Potential ecological disaster in Mzingwane district, Zimbabwe", *Jàmbá: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2015, p. 1-11; V. Chandiwana "Assessment of artisanal small-scale gold mining on environmental governance within the Mazowe Catchment", *Unpublished Masters dissertation*, University of Zimbabwe, 2016.

headmen), the police, and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife are by law tasked with protecting the environment. To what extent have their hands been tied by the *Third Chimurenga* ruling party politics and the violence that accompanied it? Answering this question will not only reveal a lot about ASGM's links to politics and violence in Kwekwe, but also clears the picture about national political dynamics in a gold dominated economy.

Although the study traces the history of Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political dynamics from the 1980s in order to demonstrate how these factors contributed to the emergence of mass-scale artisanal mining, it focuses more on the post-2000s period. This is the period when upon suffering major electoral setbacks and drastic reduction in popularity, ZANU-PF adopted a brand of nationalism it termed the *Third Chimurenga* ("third war of liberation" from colonial domination). The Third Chimurenga also entailed the handover of economic resources to the majority black Zimbabweans as ZANU-PF had promised to do during the 1970s liberation war. The newfound access to mining resources was an expression of independence and liberation.[34] However, beyond this interpretation, it was a much-needed respite to a people who were struggling under Zimbabwe's battered economy of the 1990s and much of the 2000s. It is a period that experienced an intensification of the informalisation of the Zimbabwean economy, wherein ASGM played a major part.

Literature review

The post-2000 scholarship on ASGM in Zimbabwe has mainly considered political and economic perspectives, privileging the position of the state and its machinations *vis-à-vis* artisanal miners and their communities. Political economist Mawowa, for example, has emphasised the primitive accumulation by the state and ZANU-PF elites and other aligned bureaucrats and politicians through the use of patronage and naked coercion.[35] This has emerged well in works such as Nyamunda and Mukwambo's analysis of the Marange diamond rush, whereby the state, in its bid to control lucrative mineral resources, unleashed state security machinery at the expense of local communities whose populations made up the bulk of artisanal and small-scale miners.[36] While this

[34] Moyo, "Three decades of agrarian reform in Zimbabwe", p. 152.
[35] Mawowa, "The political economy of artisanal and small-scale gold mining in central Zimbabwe", p. 924.
[36] T. Nyamunda and P. Mukwambo, 'The state and the bloody diamond rush in Chiadzwa: Unpacking the contesting Interests in the development of illicit mining and trading, c.2006–2009', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 3, Issue. 8, 2012, pp 146-165.

literature is an important eye-opener to the macro-dynamics of state-society relations in mining contexts, it falls short in one crucial respect – it does not give attention to the everyday and long-term interplay of artisanal mining, politics and violence.

Recent contributions by historian Mkodzongi, for example, refer to a vaguely defined group named *Mashurugwi*,. The name originated from the gang members' hometown, that is, Shurugwi.[37] As a result, it is reasonable to assume that one's place of origin is an important organising basis for the group. Hence, artisanal gold miners from a certain locality can become dominant and be feared because of the reputation of a gang from the same area. The group terrorised the mining communities particularly in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. Known for robbing people of cash, gold ore and other valuables, Mkodzongi disputes the conceptualisation of the group as violent and 'orderless' bandits, but as a protest movement against elite capture of resources.[38] By engaging with, and sometimes challenging, this kind of literature, the study seeks to establish the extent to which artisanal miners were either friends or foes of the state and the party, ZANU-PF. Answering this question helps us probe the idea that sometimes there is mutual benefits, hence shared, reinforcement in the interactions between a state seeking to strengthen its hegemonic position and artisanal miners seeking to benefit from its patronage in the context of a tumultuous socioeconomic and political environment.

Other scholars refute the violence that happens in the artisanal gold mining areas. Anthropologist Njabulo Chipangura argues that despite being labelled as criminals because of the informal nature of their activities, artisanal gold miners have well-organised working structures with clearly defined roles.[39] He goes on to say artisanal miners are "one big happy family". [40] The findings from this research were different from Chipangura's. In Kwekwe, there were different classes of miners some of whom were oppressive and violent to both fellow miners and people in the surrounding communities. They would either use their physical strength or their connection to the powerful ruling party politicians for their violent acts. Chipangura concurs with fellow

[37] Shurugwi is the town the phenomenon of Mashurugwi was first established before spreading to other mining areas of Zimbabwe.
[38] G. Mkodzongi, "The rise of Mashurugwi machete gangs and violent conflicts in Zimbabwe's artisanal and small-scale mining sector", *The extractive Industries and Society*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2020, pp. 1480-1489.
[39] N. Chipangura, "We are one big happy family: The social organisation of artisanal and small-scale gold mining in Eastern Zimbabwe", *The Extractive Industries and Society*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2019, pp. 1265-1273.
[40] Ibid.

anthropologist Robert Thornton. Writing about artisanal miners in South Africa, Thornton argued that illegal miners (*zamazamas*) are better described as 'artisanal' miners and entrepreneurs who create significant numbers of jobs and economic value for many local communities.[41] For the most part, they are neither ignorant desperados, nor especially violent. They have unusual non-standard mining skills and knowledge that is distinctly different from industrial miners.[42] This study benefits from their work but it adds refreshing nuance to our understanding of what happens in other gold mining areas. However, this study will disturb this romanticized view of the artisanal mining landscape by probing the source or cause of the violence that characterises everyday life in specific mining areas of Zimbabwe.

Inspiration can be taken from scholarship on violence in the artisanal gold mining sector in other regions of the world, such as Idrobo *et al* who argue that the increase in the profitability of illegal mining activities increases disputes over territorial control between illegal armed groups in order to monopolize the extraction of the precious minerals.[43] Disputes over territorial control were also observed by Sovacool in the Democratic Republic of Congo. His work on cobalt mining highlights the constant state of conflict between artisanal small-scale miners and large-scale mining interests. He reveals the forcible eviction of artisanal small-scale miners from work sites which led to protest and violent reaction against the mining companies, and against the state over processes of eviction.[44] While these studies look at contexts that have burst into outright violent conflict and even war, this study examined how violence is not only the consequence of fighting for control – of "greed and grievance" as economist Collier and political scientist Hoeffler would argue in such situations – but also as part of everyday mechanisms to organise politics and society.[45]

Migration is also a major issue in artisanal and small-scale mining contexts, particularly in the way it creates 'insiders' and 'outsiders' within mining communities. This is a setup that has often created violent clashes between the perceived outsiders and the perceived 'locals' who claim

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[41] R. Thornton, "ZamaZama, "illegal" artisanal miners, misrepresented by the South African press and government", *The Extractive Industries and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2014, pp. 127-129.
[42] Ibid.
[43] N. Idrobo et al., "Illegal gold mining and violence in Colombia", *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2014, pp. 83-111.
[44] K. B. Sovacool, "The precarious political economy of cobalt: Balancing prosperity, poverty, and brutality in artisanal and industrial mining in the Democratic Republic of the Congo", *The Extractive Industries and Society*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2019, pp. 915-939.
[45] P. Collier and A. Hoeffler, "Greed and grievance in civil war", *Oxford economic papers*, Vol. 56, No. 4, pp. 565-595.

originality in the mineral rich regions. Migration sometimes creates tensions between different 'outsider' groups who all come from outside Kwekwe. The ethnic dimension is a crucial aspect to consider in attempts at defining organised violence.[46] As anthropologist Donald Donham has observed in the context of apartheid-era South African mining, violence is more brutal in situations where antagonists adopt ethnic positions and identities. This is an aspect worth probing particularly as Kwekwe became host to people of diverse ethnic and geographic backgrounds. This clearly had a bearing on the nature and character of the violence that emerged in ASGM areas and contexts.

There is also a significant focus in the literature on ASGM on environmental matters. Scholarship concurs that there has been a dramatic and calamitous change in Zimbabwe's natural environment. Mangwende, Bhebe and Chandiwana's respective works have demonstrated the debilitating impact of unregulated, uncontrolled, free-for-all, and sometimes illegal ASGM. They have pointed to such consequences as deforestation, chemical poisoning (particularly due to cyanide and mercury), extensive land degradation and river and dam siltation, among other environmental catastrophes.[47] Mangwende goes further to demonstrate that such mining endeavours have also caused extensive damage to urban infrastructures such as schools, roads and houses as some of these lay on top of lucrative gold veins.[48] Their work is consonant with that of Marcelo *et al*, which examines the artisanal miners in Brazil. They argue that the rudimentary nature of artisanal mining activities often generate a legacy of extensive environmental degradation, both during operations and well after mining activities have ceased.

One of the most significant environmental impacts is derived from the use of mercury, which is illegal for use in gold amalgamation in Brazil but continues to be the preferred method employed

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[46] D. L. Donham, *Violence in a time of liberation*: *Murder and ethnicity at South Africa gold mine*, *1994*, London: Duke University Press, 2011.

[47] Ibid.

[48] S. Mangwende, "Effects of gold panning on communities: A case study of Shurugwi district year 2000-2013", Unpublished *Honours dissertation*, Midlands State University, Zimbabwe, 2014. D. Bhebhe, et al., "Socio-environmental damage, a looming facet of illegal gold panning: A case study of the illegal gold panners of Gwanda District, Zimbabwe", *Disaster Advances*, Vol. 6, No. 10, 2013.

V. Chandiwana, "Assessment of artisanal small-scale gold mining on environmental governance within the Mazowe Catchment", *Masters dissertation*, University of Zimbabwe, 2016.

by artisanal gold miners.[49] This study acknowledges these observations, however, it sought to complicate the story further by examining the consequences of the interactions and relationships between the state and artisanal miners. State agencies such as Zimbabwe's EMA and municipalities, and legal statutes such as environmental management act were hamstrung in their effort to police the environment leaving artisanal miners to do as they please in search of gold. This is akin to "environmental violence" as defined by Peluso and Watts.[50] The scholars link the environment to political action. They refer to the environment as an arena of contested entitlements and a theatre in which conflicts or claims over property, labour and politics of recognition play themselves out.

It is critical to emphasize that Zimbabwe has been in the middle of a deep social, political economic quagmire since the late stages of the 1990s. An estimated ninety percent of Zimbabweans are impoverished, and of these, sixty percent are food insecure.[51] The massive extraction of mineral resources has been in contrast with an economic downward slide that shows little signs of abating, even two decades after the crises began. It is for this reason that this study argues that mineral resources became a lifeline that kept the ZANU PF party in power, through providing it with a readily exploitable and lucrative avenue to bankroll its activities particularly election campaigns, and the funding of security apparatuses and enrichment of its top officials. One can also argue that there is very little incentive for the ruling party to act against environmental destruction, corruption, violence, among other actions bordering on outright plunder which seem to oil the political system that obtained in Zimbabwe in the 2000s. There is little concern even when miners use chemicals like mercury and cyanide for the purification of gold, which has obvious consequences that will affect future generations. This last point, it must be emphasized, is in direct contradiction to, for instance, the signing and ratification of the United Nations Minamata Convention on Mercury of 2013, in which Zimbabwe committed to protect human health and the environment through doing away with the use of mercury especially in gold mining.

It should also be stated that while the various manifestations and intensity of violence in ASM contexts, and its instrumentalisation by various actors including the state, is a fairly recent

[49] M. M. Veiga and Hinton, J. J. "Abandoned artisanal gold mines in the Brazilian amazon: A legacy of mercury pollution", in *Natural resources forum*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 2002. p. 15.
[50] N.L. Peluso and Watts, M. (eds.), *Violent environments*, London: Cornell University Press, 2001. p. 5.
[51] All that glitters is not gold: turmoil in Zimbabwe's mining sector, *Crisis Group Africa Report N°294*, 24.

phenomenon. It is, one could argue, a newer face to a history of collective violence that shaped the landscape of Zimbabwe since it was established as a modern nation-state after colonial conquest. In retrospect, colonial conquest itself, which was motivated, among other things by the search for gold, was a tremendously violent undertaking. David Beach and Terrence Ranger demonstrated how extreme violence characterised the confrontation between Africans and colonialists in the 1890s uprisings whereby scores of people were killed in attempts to entrench and resist colonial rule.[52] When colonial rule was firmly established, violence continued to characterise the dynamics of white settler domination, as exemplified by the extremely violent nature of labour recruitment of Africans to work on the mines, a forced labour system termed "Chibaro" (literally, a word for "rape" in Chishona").[53] Labour unrests, quasi-nationalism of the 1930s and 1940s, mass nationalist mobilizations and the eventual armed struggle of the 1960s and 1970s, were characterised by various forms of political violence as the state clashed with Africans demanding various forms of rights and outright independence.

Zimbabwe, is thus a country whose foundation and maintenance as a modern state, one could contend, was aided by ample amounts of violence and coercion in the absence of democratic structures. The 'culture' of violence did not end with the liberation struggle. Violence was deployed by many political constituents in Zimbabwe after independence. Scholarship has demonstrated how the state was often at the centre of this violence, which was largely in the context of its quest for unchallenged political hegemony. The climax of state orchestrated violence in the post-independence-era was witnessed in the 1980s when genocide was carried out against supporters of nationalist Joshua Nkomo, who was seen as an immediate threat to the post-independence government's power.[54] In the 1980s the ruling party and the state perpetrated untold violence against members of Nkomo's political party, the Zimbabwe African People's Union Party, and their sympathizers. As most of the victims were isiNdebele speaking, some scholars have, therefore, described the 'disturbances' as ethnic cleansing.[55]

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[52] D. N. Beach, "Chimurenga': The Shona Rising of 1896–97", *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 1979, pp. 395-420; T. Ranger, *Writing revolt: An engagement with African nationalism,1957-68,* Harare: Weaver Press, 2013.

[53] C. Van Onsleen, *Chibaro: African mine labour in Southern Rhodesia*, London: Pluto Press, 1900-1933.

[54] Ibid, p. 14; N. J. Kriger, *Guerrilla veterans in post-war Zimbabwe: Symbolic and violent politics, 1980–1987,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. p. 1.

[55] 20 000 people are said to have been killed in the operation to rid Midlands and Matabeleland regions of elements perceived as subversives. See F. Makonye et al., "Dynamics of pre-and post-electoral violence in Zimbabwe since

Violence as a subject of research provokes interesting theoretical explanations about, among other perspectives, its causes, manifestation, and instrumentalization. Rachel Kleinfeld's for instance refers to a phenomenon she calls "privilege violence." She argues that the main reason some democracies face so many kinds of violence is entirely because political and economic leaders of various political persuasions consciously enable violent groups to proliferate in order to protect their perks and maintain control.[56] States engulfed in "Privilege violence" are usually weak, but the weakness is not born out of poverty or inability. It emanates from governments' deliberate manipulation of state institutions, especially the politicization of key institutions such as their police and security services. These societies often develop what is seen as a culture of violence[57]. The current study benefits from Kleinfield's analysis of violence as it reflects how politicians are ready to collude with violent groups to maintain power, as is the case in the artisanal gold mining context of Zimbabwe.

Theorists who offer the sophisticated view of violence argue that while the individual dynamics of specific violent behaviour may vary somewhat, there are a number of threads that connect violence. This is referred to as concatenated (linkage) violence. Alvarez and Bachman argue that, while violence is often seen as consisting of discrete acts that are independent and separate from each other. Violence in one sphere of life often affects violence in another sphere.[58] Individuals who are violent in one setting are more likely to be violent in others.[59] Auyero and Berti have empirically traced different types of violence in Argentina's slums close to Buenos Aires, be it criminal, drug related, sexual, or domestic, and concluded that these, overlap, intersect, and blur together.[60] These scholars do not rely on one factor as the main cause of violence rather they argue that there is a link between different forms of violence.

Arias and Golstein argue for what they term "violent pluralism". From this perspective they perceive violence as critical to the foundation of Latin American democracies, the maintenance of

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Independence in April 1980 to November 2017", *African Renaissance (1744-2532)*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2020, p. 122; G. Ndlovu, "Rethinking Chimurenga and Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe: A critique of partisan national history", *African Studies Review* Vol. 55, No. 3, 2012, p. 1; Sachikonye, *When a state turns on its citizens: 60 years of institutionalised violence in Zimbabwe*, p. 16.

[56] R. Kleinfeld, *A savage order: How the world's deadliest countries can forge a path to security*, New York: Pantheon Books, 2008. p. 25.

[57] Ibid.

[58] A. Alvarez and R. Bachman, *Violence: The enduring problem*, California: Sage Publications, 2019.

[59] Ibid.

[60] A. Javier, and M. Fernanda Berti, *In Harm's way*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015.

democratic states and the political behaviour of democratic citizens.[61] Societal violence emerges as much more than just a social aberration. Violence is a mechanism for keeping in place the very institutions.[62] They argued that Latin America can be conceptualized as "violently plural" whereby states, social elites, and subalterns employ violence in the quest to establish or contest regimes of citizenship, justice rights and a democratic social order.[63] This study acknowledges the multiplicity and interconnectedness of different dimensions of violence in Zimbabwe, arguing that the violence that some may see as confined to artisanal gold mining is actually a phenomenon that has come to characterize many other facets of Zimbabwe, including everyday politics and life itself.

Research methodology and methods

Artisanal mining, politics and the violence thereof, are sensitive subjects in Zimbabwe. As such, this poses a significant set of challenges for most researchers. It is always the case that when carrying out interviews and observations one has to be granted the requisite research permission by the authorities within the researcher's case study area. To carry out this study the researcher was granted the permission letter by the Kwekwe municipality. As the researcher assumed the process of getting the letter was going to be easy, unfortunately it became very long and arduous process. The management at Kwekwe City Council were not prepared to write the research permission letter as they reasoned that the topic was 'too political', and besides Kwekwe is the president's home town, where he resided for most of the time. Hence, they did not want people who write 'negative things' about Kwekwe and the president. I was sent to the District Administrator who, in turn, advised me to go to the president's office in Kwekwe. Fortunately, after explaining that the research was only for academic purposes and not for other ulterior reasons, at the president's office, they were more understanding than the other offices that I had passed through. They authorised the council to write the letter for me. By going to the president's office, I was also able to clear a lot of other hurdles at lower offices in Kwekwe district (e.g. lower ranking council officials and the police). The process was lengthy and frustrating. However, besides the bureaucratic procedures of the offices notwithstanding, I was able to carry on with the research.

[61] D. Arias and D. M. Holstein (eds.), *Violent democracies in Latin America*, London: Duke University Press, 2010. pp. 21-22.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.

For a better understanding of the relationship between the ZANU PF party and the artisanal gold miners, it was best to use the eye of an insider. As a researcher I attended ZANU PF meetings and rallies in Kwekwe where artisanal miners also attended and some of the issues concerning mining and artisanal miners were addressed. It also came as a matter of importance for me to attain the ZANU PF membership card and to be dressed in ZANU PF regalia at the meetings. By so doing I became part of the ZANU PF supporters and could carry on with the participant observation without anyone taking me as an outsider.[64]

The study broadly used oral history as a method of gathering data. There are two subcategories of oral history that this study employed – oral testimony and life history. Oral testimony largely entails a respondent's observations about his or her surroundings, or the researcher's physical area of study.[65] There are many people in Kwekwe who were not directly involved with artisanal mining but have witnessed various social, economic and political dynamics connected to the artisanal mining phenomena. According to the historian Lekgoathi oral histories, are important repositories of memory, and interpret the voices of people who may not be participants in the study.[66] The personal observations by the interviewee, granted, may not be objective, but influenced by the social environment and personal inclinations. Sometimes respondents may have negative attitudes about artisanal mining, thus they are likely to speak disapprovingly of this activity. However, what was important is that they had a say on the situation about them or around them, which greatly informed this study.

Further to that, conducting research as a young woman in a largely male-dominated field can also be challenging, as most males are likely to be dismissive or bound by cultural taboos that situate women as 'not-belonging' in such contexts. I, however, used that as an advantage and not a complete hindrance. As an example, women are generally considered less threatening in miners' 'turf wars' or in political contestations, such that my search for information was not considered to be for any nefarious reasons. Besides, I was born into a "prominent" family in the township of Amaveni in Kwekwe. Amaveni, is the most notorious, low-income "ghetto" in the city, where poor people and general grassroots miners reside. Growing up in Kwekwe, being known and knowing

[64] My supervisors had sight of my ZANU PF membership card.
[65] D. A. *Ritchie, Doing oral history*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 14.
[66] P. Lekgoathi, "Fieldwork research and oral history methodology", Postgraduate workshop, University of South Africa: Department of history, 2004, p.1.

many of the people and the environment, are some of the many advantages that I had as a researcher. As an insider of Kwekwe, I considered myself a “native ethnographer” who is also familiar with the culture, geography and key native languages spoken by the miners and the majority of the community. I am fluent in ChiShona which is my mother tongue. I am also competent in IsiNdebele because my late father was a Ndebele and also taught and socialized me in the language.

While oral testimony focuses on the general knowledge of a person about events, dates and place, life histories are conducted with one person focusing on his or her individual life experiences.[67] This approach allows the researcher to get richer accounts from the respondents as it facilitates for personal or individual life trajectories, motivations and aspirations.[68] With regards to this study, the respondents locate themselves in the wider artisanal mining environment, and relate- to how their presence is linked to the sector for example or how it influenced by their upbringing, affected their personal lives or that of their families, or shaped their life aspirations. Life histories made the research easier and clearer as it often offered chronological accounts, which can be juxtaposed with social, economic and political developments occurring at a wider regional or national scale. For example, people who joined artisanal mining in the 1990s may refer to the ESAP-era economic crisis and how it forced them to participate in this economic activity. However, as some people may be uncomfortable with the life histories approach, as this approach sometimes appeared intrusive, it was used in combination with oral testimonies, which are more impersonal.

I relied on participants in the artisanal gold mining communities. I interviewed 20people who were directly engaged in ASM, between the age of eighteen and sixty, six community members involved in informal non-mining economic activities, 2 gold buyers and 1 farm worker, 2 farmers 1 motorist and 1 vendors. I also interviewed 1 police officer, 1 nurse and 1 Environment Management Agency official. The most targeted were the miners themselves and the gold buyers. Finding the research subjects, such as the miners and the small-scale gold buyers in townships was not a challenge as ASM was a common activity among residents of Kwekwe. I established rapport with them so that they open up on some, if not most, of their activities. I was mostly targeting the people who stay

[67] Ibid.
[68] I. Peša, "From life histories to social history: Narrating social change through multiple biographies." in K. van Walraven, (eds.), *The individual in African history: The importance of biography in African historical studies*, Leiden: Brill, 2020, pp. 91-113.

in the communities around the mining areas since they were mostly the ones who had the first hand information concerning the link between the artisanal gold miners, politicians, their everyday social, and economic activities.

I used both structured and unstructured oral history interviews. Structured interviews are advantageous because all respondents answer the same questions, hence it is easier to find and compare responses and check the reliability of data. However, structured interviews do not allow for full exploration of individual perspectives and circumstances, and also, because the interviews are restricted to predetermined questions, respondents may not step out of the interview protocol to explore unanticipated and interesting topics. It is here that the unstructured interviews fitted in. These unstructured interviews permitted the respondents to provide more in-depth data that helped me to fully understand the politics and violence in artisanal gold mining communities of Kwekwe. I could not use a voice recorder for most of my interviews, because of the political and potentially violent nature of my study location and broader Zimbabwean politics. The participants were scared that their recordings could possibly end up being used as evidence that they supported one party or the other, despite the assurances of the researcher. Therefore, the interviews were largely recorded by way of pen and a paper. It was sometimes hard to jot down everything the interviewees were saying, especially fast talkers. However I was only focusing on important information and always politely ask the participants to repeat some crucial points I would have missed in writing.

Like all other methods employed in the making of historical narratives, oral histories also have disadvantages. They may exaggerate their contribution. Interviewees may forget important events and dates. They may not be comfortable discussing some issues especially the matters concerning politics and violence or may allow the researcher insufficient time for a more in-depth interview session, among other challenges. It is in this respect that multiple sources of history such as newspapers ('the first draft of history' history"),[69] organizational reports, internet sources and scholarly literature were consulted in order to recreate, elaborate or gain a deeper understanding of violence and politics in the mining areas of Zimbabwe.

I conducted interviews on a voluntary basis to ensure confidentiality and anonymity to the individual participants. I assured them that the information they shared with me was not disclosed

[69]A. Bashirli, "Newspapers as the first draft of history. (The NYT coverage of Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: 1988-1991)", *MIĘDZYNARODOWA RADA NAUKOWA*, p. 125.

to anyone or used for any other purpose except for this academic project. Most names used in this thesis are not their real names, but pseudonyms some of which they suggested themselves.

Chapter Two

"Performing ZANU PF": Artisanal miners' participation in ZANU PF political contestation

Introduction

This chapter examines the prominent role that artisanal miners play in partisan political contestations and processes of post-2000 Zimbabwe. It discusses how, because of certain social roles and characteristics assumed by actors in informal mining contexts, which have made them a political mobilisation and constituency of interest to the ruling ZANU PF party. The chapter builds on scholarship that discusses the instrumentalisation of violence by political actors during Zimbabwe's political contestations and consolidation of power, but especially under the auspices of the ruling party-state in the post-2000 era. Historian Alexander highlights ZANU PF's reliance on the 'militarisation' of state or public institutions such as the prison services and the judiciary in its power consolidation project.[70] Similarly, historians Nyamunda and Mukwambo, in their reference to the Chiadzwa diamond rush, reveal the blatant and violent use of state security machinery in the control of mineral and other economic resources, and consequently political power from 2000-2006.[71] What is highlighted in this literature is state-orchestrated use of force and violence through its formal institutions. However, missing from these accounts is the role of artisanal miners as key actors in state violence and political contestations, an important historiographical omission. While it is common that when experiencing challenges to its power, the Zimbabwean state has often resorted to the use of formal state security apparatus such as the army, police and secret service agents, and other extra-parliamentary tactics, such as sponsoring youths to perpetrate violence, in an increasingly informal socioeconomic and political environment

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[70] J. Alexander, "Militarisation and state institutions: 'Professionals' and 'Soldiers' inside the Zimbabwe Prison Service", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 4, 2013, pp. 807-28. Also see P. Ruhanya, "The militarisation of state institutions in Zimbabwe, 2002–2017." In S. J. Ndhlovu Gatsheni and P. Ruhanya, (eds), *The history and political transition of Zimbabwe*: From Mugabe to Mnangagwa, Palgrave Macmillan: Cham, 2020, pp. 181-204. J. Mapuva, "Militarisation of public institutions, flawed electoral processes and curtailed citizen participation: The case of Zimbabwe." *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 2010, pp. 460-475.

[71] T. Nyamunda and P. Mukwambo, 'The state and the bloody diamond rush in Chiadzwa: Unpacking the contesting interests in the development of illicit mining and trading, c.2006–2009', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 3, issue. 8, 2012, pp 146-165.

of post-2000. The state has also relied on other informal channels to assert its power and control. The artisanal miners, as a growing socioeconomic section in the country, have also seen their role increase in the broader politics of Zimbabwe, but particularly during periods of partisan political contestations. They have become key in politics in which violence is hugely implicated, either during mobilisation, contestations, negotiations, or the consolidation of the state's power.

The chapter also discusses how, in artisanal mining contexts, violence that is related to political contestations and processes was neither experienced as a one-off, fixed event, nor was it perceived in one specific way. Rather, it is interpreted by various actors differently depending on the context. Moreover, the violence could not be divorced from society's everyday experience of life, given the widespread experiences of such mining activities in the country. In that sense violence, as anthropologist Das would argue, "descends" into the "ordinary" everyday social and political life, such that acts and other behavioral repertoires can be experienced as people pursue ordinary ambitions, interests, build or recreate particular social orders.[72] In other words, and unlike state perpetrated violence using the army and police, the political violence that involves artisanal miners can both be very obvious as Grasian Mkodzongi has illustrated in his study of violent miners' gangs in Zimbabwe, but it can also be fuzzy and insidious.[73] A seemingly obvious case of physical use of force by one individual (or collective) against another can be acceptable or unacceptable depending on the context. This means that particular acts as public politics are not easily definable as entertaining, harmful, bringing solidarity or doing otherwise. The following sections give an emic understanding of certain public political performances which may, to the external eye, appear rowdy or unabatedly violent, but may prove to be the basis for coercion, solidarity, or the circumscription of social and political spaces in the mining communities.

Patronage politics and artisanal miners' participation in ZANU PF structures

As the main economic actors in a largely informal economic environment, since the year 2000 the influence of artisanal miners had increased throughout the social and political fabric of gold rich

[72] D. Veena, *Life and words: Violence and the descent into the ordinary*, California: University of California Press, 2007. p. 7

areas across Zimbabwe.[74] The ruling ZANU PF party capitalised on this social influence and incorporated artisanal miners into its politics by many ways – coercion, negotiation, and rewards.[75] Negotiations and rewards often came in the form of access to many kinds of resources, potentially lucrative mining pits being one example. The ranks of the ruling party in Kwekwe, including chairpersons, secretaries and leaders of basic grassroots structures such as 'cells' and 'branches' were often filled by people of artisanal mining backgrounds. The cell, according to ZANU PF, is the vanguard of the party at the level of the village and the community.[76] A cell is composed of 50 people and a branch is made up of five cells. The importance of cells lies in that this is where new party members were recruited and inducted into the party ideology at a more personal level. The additional significance of these primary local level recruitment and membership structures is revealed by the introduction of the National Cell Day in 2022 to be marked on 11 June to celebrate the party's "grassroots, organisational, and mass mobilisation units".[77] In Kwekwe the cell group was locally defined as ZANU PF's support base, in which the membership register was usually monitored by the youths who were, in most cases, from the artisanal gold mining sector.[78] The process and practice of indoctrination is never an overnight event, but it involves continuous political education and re-education over an extended period of time.[79] In the cell groups, ZANU-PF doctrinaire political ideologies are entrenched in the everyday life of the supporters.

During political meetings, a register was a political tool deployed to check attendance and active participation.[80] Thus, the discipline and control engendered through the register are political—made by and for ZANU PF. Importantly, the register is in itself a "biography of violence," a

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[74] See S. Mawowa. "The political economy of artisanal and small-scale gold mining in central Zimbabwe," pp.921-936. C. Mabhena, "Mining with a 'Vuvuzela': reconfiguring artisanal mining in Southern Zimbabwe and its implications to rural livelihoods." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2012, pp. 219-233. G. Mkodzongi and S. J. Spiegel. "Mobility, temporary migration and changing livelihoods in Zimbabwe's artisanal mining sector." *The Extractive Industries and Society*, Vol. 7, No. 3 2020, pp.994-1001.

[75] See sources that speak about ZANU PF Patronage and coercion J. Alexander, and J. McGregor. "Introduction: Politics, patronage and violence in Zimbabwe." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 4, 2013. S. Mawowa. "The political economy of artisanal and small-scale gold mining in central Zimbabwe," pp. 921-936. C. M. Hwehwe, "Qualitative analysis of social differences within the gold mining value chain: Case of Shurugwi mining sites, Zimbabwe." *Masters dissertation*, University of Pretoria, 2020.

[76] Zanupf.org.zw/party-organs (Accessed 30 March 2022). See President Mnangagwa speech at his party cell group inKwekwehttps://ne-np.facebook.com/zanupfparty/videos/zanu-pf-national-cell-day-dambudzo-1-cell kwekwe/540367634422190/ (Accessed 3 July 2022)

[77] *The Herald*, 3 June, 2022.

[78] G. Maringira, and S. Gukurume. "Youth political mobilization: Violence, intimidation, and patronage in Zimbabwe." Political *Psychology*, 2021. P. 8

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid, Field work observation 2022.

political re-cord, an artifact, and an "archive of violence" in which people's places of residence and contact numbers were made known to ZANU-PF. "You cannot be missing for more than three cell group meetings, people begin to suspect you as a member of the opposition or a traitor in a way. Even if you are not interested it is better to go for the sake of being recorded in the attendance book",[81] said one male resident of Kwekwe. Another woman also narrated that, despite having a membership card and that her late husband's war veteran status, she was denied some benefits for not attending cell group meetings, despite her explanations that she was at work most of the times when the meetings were held.[82] Accusations or failure to attend meetings usually contributed to the denial or cancellation from food aid programmes and other benefits from the ruling party. The register which was usually monitored by the ZANU PF youth the majority of whom were selected from the artisanal gold miners, revealed that ZANU-PF survived through intense and deliberate political surveillance of the everyday. Thus, through the register, ZANU-PF cell group secretaries were able to monitor and control the activities of possible anti-ruling party supporters and less committed members in the mines and the high density suburbs such as Mbizo and Amaveni.

During fieldwork, a popular ZANU PF song that was played and danced to among artisanal miners proclaimed that "the party begins from the cells," and they often added, praising themselves, that "the party is strong at the mines" ("*musangano wakasimba kumakomba*". The artisanal mining communities (from small compounds to townships) in Kwekwe had ruling party cells whose members and leadership were involved in artisanal mining in one way or the other – actual miners, gold buyers, merchants who sold mercury that was used in gold purification, and providers of many other services. As a result, many discussions during meetings by party structures were consequently dominated by issues to do with the state of mining, how to mobilise miners for political actions, who to give access or restrict from mining and other resources.

Constant communication between the artisanal miners and the party about everyday issues meant that the party was always present and in touch with them, making it easier to mobilise their communities during electoral campaigns. According to social scientist Wilkins Ndege Muhingi, political communications is an interactive process that concerns the transmission of information among politicians, the news media and the public. It can create relations or even crises of interests,

[81] Interview with Anonymous Amaveni resident, 6 June, 2022.
[82] Interview with Anonymous, 6 June, 2022.

goals and ambitions between individuals, groups, and political structures in the process of attaining power and keeping it.[83] During campaigns by the ruling party, which sometimes took place at the places of work (the mines), ZANU PF officials, who in most cases were also miners themselves, reminded the gatherings that *the party* was *the only party* to vote for as the artisanal gold miners because it owns the country and the gold which they needed to sustain their lives.[84] "After enjoying the money from the gold that the ruling party is giving you the freedom to mine, you will see some of them behaving like blind people when they got into the ballot box" an aspiring ZANU PF candidate for local council elections said in December 2021 during a rally in Amaveni Township in Kwekwe.[85] This was an irony meaning that when the miners get into the ballot, they should not be blind to vote for any other parties other than ZANU PF. This style of political approach to the miners was not exclusive to Kwekwe; rather it was a ZANU PF strategy in most gold-mining towns and communities in Zimbabwe. "You cannot mine the minerals in this nation if you are not a follower of the ruling party, let us come to an understanding that everyone must leave the mining areas if they do not support ZANU PF", a ZANU PF politician remarked in his campaign address in Chisero village.[86] With the above evidence, one can argue therefore, that artisanal mining presented a new and very broad opportunity for ZANU PF political mobilisation, where its popularity has been waning especially in urban areas and among the few remaining formally employed population of the country. The following section look at particular cases of how such mobilisation was enacted, and the place of violence in ASM activities.

Violent slogans feeding violent politics

The usage of political slogans is one rhetorical method by which a large group of people may express their collective ideas. They are used to motivate and to convey mood or opinion.[87] Slogans, particularly those conveying violent intents were part of the Zimbabwean political landscape since the liberation struggle from colonialism in the 1970s.[88] When meeting with the masses at the all-

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[83] W. N. Muhingi, et al. "Political communication for sustainable development in Kenya." *Political Communication*, Vol. 5, No. 18, 2015, pp. 127-184.

84See a video of the ZANU-PF meeting taking place at Globe and Phoenix Mine https://www.facebook.com/OfficialDhala/videos/457733608480092 (Accessed 15 August 2022)

[85] Speech by E. D Ncube, Amaveni Hall, 4 March, 2021.

[86] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15EkNaYb9zc (Accessed 20 December 2021)

[87] C. Newsome, "The use of slogans in political rhetoric" *The Corinthian*, Vol. 4, article 3, 2002, p. 21.

[88] N. Kriger, 'The Zimbabwean war of liberation: Struggles within the struggle', *Journal of southern African studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1988, p. 310. A. Viriri, "Seiko Musina Morari?" The carnivalesque modes of the pungwe Institution in selected Shona novels." PhD diss., University of South Africa, 2013.

night vigils known as "*pungwe*" gatherings, for example, the anti-colonial fighters would chant slogans to motivate the masses, for them to continue supporting and fighting the struggle.[89] After independence slogans from colonial rule in 1980, ZANU-PF retained most of its slogans which are used at political meetings and rallies in contemporary Zimbabwe. The ruling party's slogans which almost always start with the phrase "Pamberi" in Shona or "Phambili" in isiNdebele ("forward with….) and ends with "Pasi" or "Phansi" directed at real or imagined enemies or "sell-outs" have been modified to fit the contemporary socioeconomic and political realities. From the researcher's observation, politicians would chant, *Pamberi ne*ZANU PF! *Pamberi!* Came the answering shout *Pamberi na*President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa! A mass of hands would punch the air in unison *Pamberi*![90] The supporters would roar.

After the politicians finish their roll call of chants, the crowd was asked to sit down and listen to the speech of the day. Political rallies were an integral component of the ruling party's political organisation and mobilisation in Kwekwe, and at most of them one was able to observe the participation of artisanal miners in public political actions. Rallies in general were a genre of political discourse and actions characterised by different signifying practices among them speeches, songs, party regalia and use of surrogate or nonverbal language.[91] Analysing the political rallies in the Zimbabwean context, Lewanika suggests that rallies are an integral element of ZANU-PF's legitimacy seeking tools, and a platform at which the party preys on emotions to inspire action, activate structures and grow the voter base.[92] ZANU-PF rallies were a potent persuasive part of a dynamic political machine that was used to win hearts and minds of voters.[93] In Kwekwe, the key rallies happened with more frequency in places such as Mbizo and Amaveni townships where most artisanal miners and other people in the informal sector such as vendors, motor mechanics etc. live. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, in recent years the party conducted

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[89] V. M. Matiza and D. Mutasa, 'War songs and hope during the second chimurenga in Zimbabwe: A critical discourse analysis approach' *South African Journal of African Language*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 2020. Also see C. Lionel *et al*. "Nationalist politics in Zimbabwe: the 1980 elections and beyond." *Review of African Political Economy,* Vol, 7, No. 18, 1980, p.51.

[90] https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-opinion-sc-columnist-byo-127627.html https://mg.co.za/article/2013-01-04-00-zimbabwes-war-of-empty-slogans/ Also see https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/live-blog-mwenezi-meet-the-people-rally/(Both Accessed 07 February 2023)

[91] A. Mohammed, and R.Taiwo, "Discursive strategies in newspaper campaign advertisements for Nigeria's 2011 elections." *Discourse and Communication*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2013, p. 435-455.

[92] M. Lewanika, 'Campaigning, coercion, and clientelism: ZANUPF's strategies in Zimbabwe's presidential elections, 2008-2013.' *PhD diss*., The London School of economics and political science, 2019.

[93] Ibid.

rallies at the place of work, namely at or near the mines, something that symbolizes not only the big connection between political clout and gold mining, but also the party's realisation of a bigger political constituency among various actors in the informal sector.

ZANU-PF slogans were altered depending on where the meeting was taking place. For example, when addressing farmers, the politicians would add Pamberi nevarimi/ pambili labalimi! When conducted in Kwekwe's artisanal gold mining context, the ruling party's rallies and slogans recited often reminded and encouraged political actors to hold on to ZANU-PF, the party which self-proclaimed to be the custodians of Zimbabwe's mineral wealth. The slogans then, were translated to "Forward with holding on to the mineral wealth" or other phrases that entail holding on to the resources at whatever costs, including violence, hence "Down with those who oppose ['dissidents']" the party's hegemony.[94] According to the historian Rusakaniko, "Down" symbolises ZANU-PF's political mantra of violence and death.[95] While the violence was not always acted out in the physical sense, it pervaded everyday language and everyday circumstance among miners such that the disapproval of someone's actions (say, rival work groups or sport groups) could be said in terms of "mhandu" ("dissidents") who had to be laid "down" and deserved whatever was meted out to them including physical harm. The idea of "sell-outs" is embedded in ZANU-PF's discourse of "patriotic history," based on the binaries of "patriots" and "sell-outs." ZANU-PF loyalists and sympathisers were viewed as patriots while opposition politicians and supporters were branded sell-outs. The use of ruling party slogans to prescribe and circumscribe social actions necessarily naturalised the party's presence in local communities. It also, legitimised, at least in the eyes of locals, its political actions. The emergence of other parties or their intrusion was viewed by the artisanal miners as some kind of disturbance of a certain social and political order. One artisanal gold miner conceded, "If we support the opposition, what are going to eat? I cannot be deceived by those who are saying Chamisa for presidency, maybe they know what they eat. I have nothing, so I support ZANU -PF to get access to the minerals to sustain my family livelihood."[96]

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[94] See you tube video ZANU-PF youth league performing slogans that are intolerant of opposition https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=skU4-olK20s (Accessed 2 September 2022)
[95] C. Rusakaniko, "Barriers to democratic governance: The case of Movement for Democratic Change in Zimbabwe."
[96] Interview with Simbai Sigauke, artisanal gold miner, 3 June, 2022.

Similarly, the researcher was told by one manager of a small mine near Kwekwe, where a number of artisanal miners work that

> support a party that protects me from jail if I face some problems. The gold business has many traps, you can commit crime even by mistake, so ZANU -PF can protect me. What can Chamisa [the leader of the main opposition party] do for me? ZANU- PF is sweet because it provides for me to eat. Even my boys who work here know that we don't tolerate the MDC [main opposition, now CCC] here at the mine. If you want Chamisa you go and work for Chamisa.[97]

He finished the conversation with the current slogan of the ruling party, "*Pamberi neZANU PF 2023 five million votes ED pfee, Chamisa tsaaa*" ("forward with ZANU- PF, 2023 five million votes, Chamisa tsaaa ('*tsaaa*', as an onomatopoeia for getting crushed or completely destroyed).[98] By tsaa, they mean/meant to destroy or break something. The slogans that carry threat of violence were complemented by the ruling party's promises to deliver mineral wealth to the artisanal miners hence "*pamberi nekupa upfumi kuvanhu*" which means "forward with giving wealth to the people", and a withdrawal of the privilege for those who do not follow the party's line.

It was also important for the ZANU -PF supporters to know the slogans by heart, as they were expected to keep abreast with changes within these slogans. By repeating these slogans they were put through a regime of indoctrination.[99] Through this, the images and words were engraved as epitaphs on their minds.[100] In this way, faced with little freedom, some citizens in Kwekwe passively participated in order to avoid painful encounters, such as threats and actual physical violence particularly from the Mbimbos. Rueben narrated an incident that happened in 2001 when his father was severely beaten by the Taliban group after he failed to chant the theme slogan for that year.[101] The above has to be taken together with the dissemination of a powerful state

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[97] Field notes, December 2022.
[98] ED is an abbreviation for President Mnangangwa's first and second names Emmerson and Dambudzo. 'PFEE" is a shona word which literally means to easily get in.
[99] N. Marongwe, "Political aesthetics, the Third Chimurenga, and the ZANU-PF mobilization in Shurugwi district of Zimbabwe." *Journal of Developing Societies,* Vol. 29, No. 4, 2013, pp. 477 and 478.
[100] Ibid.
[101] The Taliban was a group of violent youths who were also artisanal miners and ruling party supporters, they probably named their group after the brutal, fundamentalist religious group that held power over most of Afghanistan during the late 1990s.

propaganda, that of a nation at war against the British, the European Union, the United States of America and their local agents who are allegedly in the form of the opposition (MDC/CCC).

In one way, the capture of actors in artisanal gold mining sector of Kwekwe as political players was centred on the pervasion of a populism that was tinged with violence in its various shapes. The violence needed not be overt physical threat or threats to the withdrawal of life sustaining activity of mining, it was also symbolic as was evident in sociocultural practices and performances such as music, everyday lingo, rumours and sometimes even the comical. I briefly turn to this latter aspect in the following sections.

The socio-mythical and the morality of violence in ASGM space

In Zimbabwe there is widespread belief in the use, abuse, and fear of socio-mythical superstitions, ideas and worldviews. In general, the figure of the witch or warlock or sorcerer, and also the sexually promiscuous (particularly the prostitute) are the epitome of evil and energies that negate social order, progress and common values. In one of his arguments about witchcraft, anthropologist Ashforth says, for people who live in a world with witches, the willingness of a person to practice witchcraft automatically cancels their rights to membership in the human community; indeed, it negates their claim to be considered human. If witches are something other than human, they can hardly claim rights to protect themselves from the righteous anger and justice of community.[102] Among artisanal mining communities such beliefs were pervasive, at their homes and work places at the mines, and also in public political spaces and life. During the many political gatherings that the researcher attended, the socio-mythical ideas about the use and misuses of magical powers, especially witchcraft, were discussed in relation to gold mining/buying entrepreneurs who were also aspiring political candidates. The rhetoric and practice of violence, as mentioned in the last section, needed not be fixed and limited to the physical and tangible world, the mythical and symbolic which was part and parcel of the everyday perceptions of social life and morality were enfolded together with the violence.

Much deployed was the violence of the word, where individual or collective actions were designated as disputing certain social and moral orders. For instance, the rival supporters of ZANU -PF's main parliamentary candidates in Kwekwe, Kandros Mugabe and Energy Dhala Ncube,

[102] R. Ashforth quoted by S. L., Kugara, "Witchcraft belief and criminal responsibility: A case study of selected areas in South Africa and Zimbabwe." PhD diss., 2017.

during the party's December 2021 internal elections traded accusations of witchcraft towards the respective leaders. Both candidates are well-known artisanal mining entrepreneurs with a huge following from among Kwekwe's grassroots artisanal miners. Because of his wealth – in terms of many houses, wives, cars and many other things – Kandros was denigrated by rivals for using witchcraft for the promotion of his businesses. Some said the money he used during his campaigns was not real money but found through supernatural means, particularly the use of "*tokoloshi*s" ("goblins") to generate wealth out of non-visible production. Economist Erich Leistner stresses that witchcraft activities are harmful and that they operate in extreme secrecy, and for this reason they constitute a threat not only to individual victims but also to the harmony and the very existence of the whole community.[103] Kandros 'powers' were also said to extend to his ability to having sexual intercourse with many women, without them knowing, let alone their consent, a form of magic called "*mubobobo*".[104] "Did you not hear that last year all the women at Kandros' BD-mine woke up without underwear? I am personally scared of him", said one woman vendor that the researcher interviewed in Kwekwe city.[105] On the other side, Kandros's supporters also denigrated his rival, Energy Dhala Ncube, whom they accused of being a son of a prostitute who was raised by a single mother.[106] "*Hativhotere mwana wemusango asina baba, tovhotera anevabereki vatinoziva*" (we will not vote for a wild, fatherless child, we vote for the one with whom we know their parents), Mugabe's supporters would say. Apart from devaluing someone's social standing, the accusations and counter accusations could be seen as a form of moral violence where those accused of disturbing a social and moral order were held as deserving moral punishment and sanctions.

According to the political scientists McKay and Tenove, the moral denigration of political opponents degrades speech norms and is toxic to mutual respect. Less obviously, the use of false identities makes it possible for fake accounts to misrepresent the views of social groups in a way that denies them the capacity to author their own claims.[107] One can argue that these beliefs and how they spread through gossip worked as grassroots supporters feared or were not sure whom to

[103] Leistner, Erich. "Witchcraft and African development." *African Security Review* 23, No. 1, 2014, pp.53-77.
[104] Mubobobo is a kind of black magic whereby a man can supposedly have sex with a woman from a distance and without her consent.
[105] Interview with anonymous vendor, 15 March 2022.
[106] This is mentioned in the sense that he was raised by a single mother.
[107] S. McKay and C.Tenove. "Disinformation as a threat to deliberative democracy." *Political Research Quarterly* 74, No. 3, 2021, pp.703-717.

follow between the two people who were rumored to support evil money/ powers. But in the context of Kwekwe where there were huge inequalities and poverty such wealth amassed was looked at suspiciously because its inexplicable, moral and mythical explanations became plausible, but also an excuse to punish individuals and groups for disturbing social cohesion. Anthropologists of southern Africa such as Ashforth, and Comaroff highlighted the violence entailed in dabbling in the mythical where society faces massive poverty and sociopolitical inequalities.[108] The targets of this violence, interestingly, can be powerful political and business figures as well as the most vulnerable in the society, whom the people at the grassroots may view as unfairly benefitting from their suffering or arresting their social progress.

Beyond the openly stated or implied rhetoric, political actions among artisanal miners were also represented in the way they dress. One could propose the concept of "sartorial violence" to denote the violence meted out or the sanctions individuals would suffer for presenting or failure to present a certain sartorial (that is, fashion appearance). The system of bodily adornment as argued by Terence Turner is not only a matter of taste and outward appearance, but it is 'social skin' to denote social affiliation, notions of class or even intentions and other forms of social action.[109] The surface of the body, as the common frontier of society, the social self, and the psycho-biological individual; becomes the symbolic stage upon which the drama of socialisation is enacted and expressed.

Sometimes in expressing loyalty to their chosen political parties, Zimbabweans wear their "political party regalia". Yet in a context that is politically dominated by ZANU- PF, artisanal miners and others in the informal sectors would wear ZANU- PF attire not only to protect themselves and their business but to also access resources that come with being aligned to ZANU PF, what Grasian Mkodzongi called "performing ZANU PF".[110] There is also room to argue that clothes and appearance was part of a socialisation into the kind of collective violence that happened amongst the group of miners. The perception is huge in Zimbabwe that one faces little or no legal consequences even after committing a heinous crime if they are affiliated to the ruling party. Very

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[108] A. Ashforth. *Witchcraft, violence and democracy in South Africa*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
J. Comaroff, and J. L. Comaroff. "Occult economies and the violence of abstraction: Notes from the South African post-colony*" American Ethnologist*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1999.
[109] T. S. Turner, "The social skin," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory 2*, No. 2, 2012, p. 15.
[110] Mkodzongi, Grasian. "Fast tracking land reform and rural livelihoods in mashonaland west province of Zimbabwe: opportunities and constraints, 2000-2013." *PhD dissertation*, 2013, p. 138. Also see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTojGCZ3ic8 (Accessed 16 June 2022)

often clothes, particularly ZANU PF regalia, were used to intimidate others to vacate workplaces or public places if their interests differ.[111] One example is an incident that occurred during the 2000 parliamentary elections in Kwekwe's Amaveni suburb. The key candidates were the now-President Emmerson Mnangagwa of ZANU PF and Blessing Chebundo of MDC. While both ZANU PF and MDC supporters were dressed in their respective party regalia, they were eagerly awaiting the results. A man wearing an MDC t-shirt walked past a group of ZANU PF supporters and Talibans.[112] Feeling provoked, the Talibans physically assaulted the opposition member for having the guts to come near them wearing the opposition t-shirt. In another incident that was reported by the *Newsday*, there was drama in Nzvimbo at a ZANU PF-organised sports gala when two senior party officials fought over regalia, as factionalism took centre stage. ZANU PF Central Committee member, John Nhamburo was irked that Justine Marufu, a member of the ruling party Provincial Committee came to the function wearing regalia imprinted with the face of a rival politburo member, Kenneth Musanhi. As a result Nhamburo ordered Marufu to go and change his regalia because it showed that he was representing Musanhi instead of the President Emmerson Mnangagwa[113] Besides political party regalia, artisanal miners would also carry the tools they used in the mines such as torches, hammers, and shovels. In addition, if they attend the meeting or rally after work, they were easily identifiable by their soiled clothes. Such public appearances gave them a group standing and status; such as fearlessness and courage, which on many occasions had been used by the ruling party to intimidate opponents.

Post-independence political songs and the *Makorokoza* community

The numerous struggles for identity, nation and politics have found articulation through music within most African countries. Zimbabwe's political history, for instance, is infested by impeccable operationalisation of music in countering and re-encountering, configuring and reconfiguring the ideas and discourses about nation, politics and identity.[114] Remarkably, the Zimbabwean experience bears testimony to increasing predilections for top-down renditions of

[111] G. Mwonzora and K. Helliker, Learning and performing political violence: ZANU-PF youth and the 2008 presidential run-off election in Zimbabwe, *Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 79, Issue 4, pp. 367-386
[112] Talibans was a moniker for one of the violent ZANU PF militia groups.
[113] Newsday, 9 December, 2021.
[114] J. Msimanga, Mbongeni. "Popular music and the concept of the dissident in post-independence Zimbabwe." in *Indigenous African popular music*, Vol. 2, Palgrave Macmillan: Cham, 2022, pp. 59-75.

music in a context that is largely epitomised by subaltern composition.[115] This polarised landscape created a scenario in which the composition, production, dissemination and ownership of music become a highly contested terrain.[116] Apparently the 21st century, witnessed major convulsions of the economy under ZANU PF rule. Among many controls, the state intensified its commitment to produce and control music. This was part of many mechanisms intended to construct and foster a state-centred discourse.[117] In Kwekwe, songs were used as spectacles showcasing both the power of ZANU PF and the use of violence. They provided spaces in which to denounce, if not condemn, the opposition.

This section seeks to shed light on how the political songs managed to influence violence. The political parties in Zimbabwe recognised the significance of using songs to mobilise the masses in order to augment their different political agendas. Violence was given value, characterised as emancipatory. The song *Zimbabwe ndeyeropa*, which literally means Zimbabwe was born from blood, is one example of how ZANU PF supporters engaged in artisanal gold mining landscapes deployed violence in order to defend the country against the so called sell-outs. The lyrics of the song went as:

Zimbabwe ndeyeropa baba
Zimbabwe was born from the blood, father
Zimbabwe ndeyeropa remadzibaba
Zimbabwe was born out of the blood of our fathers
Tairohwa takasungwa baba
We were beaten whilst tied, father
Tairohwa takasungwa mbira dzakondondo.
We were beaten whilst strongly tied

[115] F. Mangena et al, (eds), *Sounds of life: Music, identity and politics in Zimbabwe*, United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016, p. xi.
[116] J. Msimanga, Mbongeni. "Popular music and the concept of the dissident in post-independence Zimbabwe." pp. 59-75.
[117] Ibid.

The songs frequently conveyed the idea that blood was shed for the nation's birth and that blood was required for its survival.[118] Those who backed the opposition were labeled as betrayers, and enemies unworthy of the democratic right to join the political party of their choice. The lyrics also emphasised that blood sacrifice was necessary both before and after national independence.[119] According to the song, the militants who died in the struggle for independence sacrificed their lives for the sake of the country's independence, and those fighting in the Third Chimurenga were also called upon to do the same and defend the Zimbabwe's sovereignty. Many farm invaders performed the song as they evicted the white farmers and black farm workers during the Fast Track Land Reform Programme.[120] During the *jambanja* (commotion) that was brought about by the FTLRP just as noted by agronomist Moyo, the FTLRP did not only result in the 'liberation' of farm lands but all other natural resources as well, hence leading to the equal invasion of the disused mines. Indeed, the performance of the song, '*Zimbabwe Ndeye Ropa*' during this period served not only to take the peoples' minds back to the time of the liberation struggle of the 1970s, but also to sacralize the whole exercise, considering that land and its minerals is sacred in Zimbabwe because it is associated with ancestors.[121] One man in Kwekwe, narrated that, 'Zimbabwe ndeyeropa' was the song that the early artisanal miners were singing when they were entering the disused mines. By 'the song' they meant that, it is our fathers who fought and some died because of this land and the resources in it, hence because the fellow Zimbabweans died for the land, no negotiations, only violence was supposed to be used to take what belonged to them. For this reason, much credit was given to the ruling party who played the leading role in encouraging the seizure of land and natural resources from the hands of the white settlers. This answers the question about where the loyalty of the artisanal gold miners to the ruling party in Kwekwe emanated from.

During the researcher's fieldwork, the ruling party theme song prior to the 2023 presidential elections was titled, "Small boy". The song was sung at most of the ZANU PF rallies and meetings

[118] N. Marongwe, "Political aesthetics, the Third Chimurenga, and the ZANU-PF mobilization in Shurugwi district of Zimbabwe." pp. 457-485.
[119] Ibid
[120] E. Chitando, and J. Tarusarira. "The deployment of a 'sacred song' in violence in Zimbabwe: The case of the song 'Zimbabwe Ndeye Ropa Ramadzibaba' (Zimbabwe was/is Born of the Blood of the Fathers/Ancestors) in Zimbabwean Politics." *Journal for the Study of Religion*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 2017, pp. 5-25.
[121] Ibid.

all over Zimbabwe.[122] The most significant emphasis was that, the opposition leader Nelson Chamisa was a small boy in terms of wisdom and knowledge of the Zimbabwean colonial and liberation history, hence no matter the circumstance he would never be given a chance to be the president. Voting for him was another way of requesting for the white settlers to recolonise Zimbabwe, as claimed by the ruling party and its supporters.[123]

Taurirai small boy, nyika haitongwe pawhatsapp!
Tell the small boy, the country is not ruled on whatsapp!

Taurirai small boy, nyika haitongwe painternet!
Tell the little boy, the country is not ruled on the internet!

Zadzanai pawhatsapp Kuswera muchifadza maBritish!
Fill up the propaganda on whatsapp to please the British!

Taurirai Chamisa nyika haitongwe patwitter!
Tell Chamisa, the country is not ruled on twitter!

Hauna shoko rebudiriro kuronga musindo kufadza varungu!
You do not have any advice on development and planning, but a campaign to please the whites!

Waguta macand cake, wotodanidzira sangisheni!
You have had enough of candy cakes, and you are now calling for sanctions!

According to political scientist Kriger, ZANU PF supporters were not only taught to hate but to totally eliminate MDC on the Zimbabwe political landscape through political violence.[124] MDC/CCC leadership were branded as front and agents of British's neo-colonialism. Control over

[122]See, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qjuh6uOmXuc(Accessed 30 May 2022) and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktGWc_Z7myo (Accessed 30 May 2022)
[123] The Standard, 24 February 2022, Newsday, 24 February 2022.
[124] N. Kriger, "ZANU (PF) strategies in general elections, 1980–2000: Discourse and coercion." *African Affairs*, Vol. 104, No. 414, 2005, pp. 1-34.

land and mineral resources has been the source of immense political capital for ZANU PF, as partisan access has been used to win votes in the countryside and towns and to undercut the MDC (CCC), which has had little or nothing in terms of material reward to offer its supporters[125] The phrase "Taurirai small boy nyika haitongwe painternet" carried a significant meaning to the artisanal miners in Kwekwe, because in fact they were not receiving anything from the opposition except for the promises that were allegedly going to be fulfilled after ZANU PF had been removed from power. Hence the miners could not believe in promises. On the other hand, ZANU PF provided the urgently needed basic needs to the miners, which was the permission to mine the gold. According to the political scientist Hammer *et al*, the combination of de-industrialisation and the disappearance of urban jobs has been matched by a resurgence of livelihoods hinging directly on access to land and minerals – small-scale mining in diamonds and gold as well as agricultural production – combined with a dramatic mushrooming of trading economies in these and other products that stretch across regional borders[126] The informal sectors such as artisanal gold mining remade ZANU PF powers discussed above.

Only some slight changes were made to suit the 21st century generation for some of the liberation war songs. Although in the 21st century, the songs such as *Mabhunu maruza* (colonisers/whites, you have lost) was still sung by the ruling party supporters. According to the phenomenologists of religion Chitando and Tarusarira the language embedded in war songs constitutes an art of persuasion and triggers hope.[127] Singing of the liberation war songs as performances of violence similar to that which the guerrillas used during the war was meant to engulf the artisanal miners in Kwekwe with the spirit of war, there by transforming their political dispositions. The election campaign was about going back to war. As one of the war veterans put it at the rally, the spirit of the liberation war had repossessed them[128]

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[125] J. Alexander, and J. McGregor. "Introduction: Politics, patronage and violence in Zimbabwe." p.758. Also see President Mnangagwa speech telling supporters that opposition has nothing to offer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZiFtPS3SkW4 (Accessed 30 April 2022)

[126] A. Hammer, et al. "The Zimbabwe crisis through the lens of displacement." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2010, pp. 263-68.

[127] E. Chitando, and J. Tarusarira. "The deployment of a 'sacred song', pp. 5-25.

[128] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Ry614I4VkY (Accessed 10 March 2023) O. B. Mlambo and T. Gwekwerere. "Names, labels, the Zimbabwean liberation war veteran and the third Chimurenga: The language and politics of entitlement in post-2000 Zimbabwe." *African Identities*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2019, pp. 130-146.

The song *Mabhunu maruza* showed that despite the popularity of the opposition movement, the official ZANU PF position had been to celebrate the forever the independence of everything including natural resources such as gold:

Mabhunu sori ya ya ya sori maruza!

Sorry British nationals you have lost it!

Paminda tatora!

We have taken our land!

Migodhi tatora!

We have taken our mines!

Pavhoti maruza!

You have lost the vote!

Chorus

Sorry ya ya ya sorry!

According to the psychoanalyst Fanon, "the future of culture and the richness of a national culture are also based on the values that inspired the struggle for freedom" and process developed to become intolerant of criticism as well as witnessing unprecedented black/African political and economic control of the country's natural resources.[129] This resonates with what social scientist Raftopoulos termed "Mugabeism" a term formed out of the rule and practices of former and late president Robert Mugabe, which was therefore seen as a doctrine of 'permanent revolution' leaping from one *Chimurenga* to the next *Chimurenga*.[130] It has no time for questions or alternatives. It is a doctrine of violence because it sees itself as a doctrine of revolution. ZANU PF's *Mabhunu maruza* shows that given a chance the white colonial government would recolonise Zimbabwe through the alleged "puppet" opposition leaders.

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[129] F. Fanon, "Towards the African revolution: Political essays." *Trans. by Haakon Chevalier*, New York: Grove Press, 1964, p. 167.

[130] B. Raftopoulos, The state in crisis: Authoritarian nationalism, selective citizenship and distortions of democracy in Zimbabwe. In A. Hammar, etal, (eds.), *Zimbabwe's unfinished business: Rethinking land state and nation in the context of crisis*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2003, pp. 217–241.

The opposition parties failed to counter effectively the ruling party's invocation of liberation struggle history, and found themselves virtually unable to freely campaign in parts of ZANU PF's stronghold of Kwekwe, where the majority were artisanal miners and some were farmers who gained access to resources such as land and gold mining through the land reform programme. As claimed by Alexander and Chitofiri, the political violence performed by ZANU PF youths exists in part because of the ideological framing of the heroic narratives of the birth of the nation-state in 1980.[131] The song *mabhunu maruza*, which continued to be sung way after the liberation struggle and the land reform programme, still had impact and was mostly sung by actors in the informal economic sectors such as vending and mining as a way of celebrating the so called benefits of independence.

Furthermore the language through the ZANU PF political songs, contained the information and description of the ballot papers. This was a strategic song for ZANU PF. It explains the ballot paper and puts it in its simplest explanation.

Paya paya paya!

Miti miviri!

Two trees!

Chikomo pakati!

A hill in-between!

Miti miviri!

Two trees!

X pakati!

X in the middle!

Miti miviri!

Two trees!

[131] J. Alexander, and K. Chitofiri. "The consequences of violent politics in Norton, Zimbabwe." In S. Chan and R. Primorac (eds.), *Zimbabwe since the Unity Government*, Routledge: Oxfordshire, 2013, pp. 81-94.

VaMugabe/vaMnangagwa pakati!

Mr. Mugabe/ Mr. Mnangagwa in the middle!

CHORUS

Pakanaka paya pakanaka!

It is good, it is good!

The above explains the features of the ballot paper and where an x is supposed to be placed when one is voting. This strategy of manipulating people to vote for the ruling party through a song that informs supporters about the ballot was almost similar with happenings in other areas in Zimbabwe. According to political scientist Sachikonye, in places such as Mudzi and Uzumba-Marapfungwe, a lot of literates and known opposition supporters were instructed to declare they were illiterate and ZANU PF agents accompanied them to the ballot box where they voted for ZANU PF under duress. Voters in rural areas were also forced to record the serial numbers of the ballot papers they used and hand them over to the party's leadership after the poll. The strategy was crafted in a way which ensured that ZANU-PF functionaries would supervise and intimidate the electorates without immediately drawing the attention of observers.[132] As previously stated in this dissertation, artisanal miners made up the majority of ZANU PF supporters in Kwekwe. Some of them were school dropouts with only a primary education, while others were unable to attend any level of school due to financial difficulties and a variety of other factors. The song introduced this group of supporters to the ballot paper, explaining the features on it so that they would not be confused on voting day.

The chorus *pakanaka paya* (It is good, It is good!), literally meant, that nobody would go wrong by voting for the ruling party. As the miners, just as most people particularly in the informal sector were labelled to be already enjoying the fruit of ZANU PF's aid. The song portrayed that it was the turn for the supporters to return the favour to the ruling party. As mentioned by sociologist Meyer, in patronage transactions, the transactor (patron) has the power to give some benefit which the respondent (client) desires. Examples of this would be the improvement of a road near the respondent's house, or the employment of the respondent (or his relative) in an office over which

[132] L. Sachikonye, *When a state turns on its citizens*, 2011, p. 45.

the (patron) has control. The number and extent of such benefits naturally vary with the power of the (patron); but even the most influential is unlikely to please everyone who comes to him. He must therefore command these direct patronage transactions so that they produce linkages with key people who can bring followers with them.[133]

Violent groups and violent electoral campaigns

Violence has been a constant feature of Zimbabwean politics throughout the post-independence period. Since 1999, due to the emergence of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) as a forceful political contender which threatened the power of the ruling party, the place of violence in Zimbabwean politics has come again to the fore after a slight lull in the 1990s.[134] Peculiar about the post-2000 era is the inclination to use, and the increasing role of, state affiliated vigilante groups and para-militaries. In urban areas such as Harare, ZANU PF is known to have organised and supported vigilante groups from among informal traders in the townships of Mbare, Epworth, Highfields and other poor suburbs of the city. Vigilante groups such as *Chipangano* in Mbare and *Upfumi Kuvadiki* in Epworth were allowed to engage in some measure of illicit activities so long as the ruling party or its key leaders benefited politically from the vigilantes' quasi-political activities.[135] In a place such as Kwekwe, where the ruling party has managed to incorporate the artisanal gold miners into the party, it took advantage of the already established collectives and social networks among the miners. Artisanal miners were often organised in work groups known as "masindalo" ("syndicates") which carry a loose organisational hierarchy. It is true that violence was a common *modus operandi* to organise such groups as many competed for resources and membership at the mines. The same group structures were carried on to political organisation and conduction of various political processes of the ruling party. That is, on top of the already established structures such as the party's branches, cells, district committees, and provincial

[133] A. Meyer, "Quasi-Groups in the Study of Complex Societies", in M. Banton, (eds.), *The social anthropology of Complex Societies*, Routledge: New York, 1966, pp. 113-114.

[134] See, L. Sachikonye, *When a State turns on its Citizens*, p. 18. T. Zinyama, "The complexity of democratic transition: The Zimbabwe case, 1999 to 2011." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 2. No. 12, 2012, p. 136. F. Hanne, and K. Höglund, "Electoral institutions and electoral violence in sub-Saharan Africa." *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 2016, pp. 297-320.

[135] J. McGregor. "Surveillance and the city: Patronage, power-sharing and the politics of urban control in Zimbabwe." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 4, 2013, pp. 783-805. T. Mutongwizo, "Chipangano governance: Enablers and effects of violent extraction in Zimbabwe." *Africa Peace & Conflict Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2014. G. Mwonzora, and K. Helliker, "Learning and performing political violence: ZANU-PF youth and the 2008 presidential run-off election in Zimbabwe." *African Studies*, Vol. 79, No. 4, 2020, pp. 367-386.

committees, among others. In a way, riding on the informal organisation of the poor, especially artisanal miners and traders shows ZANU PF's organisational and operational flexibility in face of the challenges it has faced against its rule since the early 2000s. The phenomena highlighted here points to what Huggins long observed about the relationship between a state in crisis and vigilantes. She argues that the more a state drifts into crisis and possible collapse the more it relies on vigilantes that operate in the shadows rather than the bright lights of consensus and legitimate authority.[136] Due to the connections between the vigilantes and the state, state security structures usually turn a blind eye to vigilante activities or even deny the existence of such vigilante groups. The state allowed these vigilantes to engage in some measure of illicit activities so long as the ruling parties or its key leaders benefit politically from the vigilantes' quasi-political activities.

The most violent vigilant groups in Kwekwe were also the most active in the artisanal gold areas where they were known as the *Mbimbos\Mamonya* in ChiShona language and *Izixoxodo* in IsiNdebele. These groups worked more closely with the ZANU PF politicians in the mines of Kwekwe. Mkodzongi mentions a group with similar traits called *Mashurugwi*. This group move around the mines and the communities outside the mining areas terrorizing people and sometimes taking their belongings.[137] His argument was that they are a rebel group that is against the government social and economic mismanagement.[138] During fieldwork the researcher observed that, the groups far from being resistant against the state as claimed by Mkodzongi, actually had a symbiotic partnership with the state. Sometimes they organised themselves as families. For instance, the most notorious group in Kwekwe were the Maketo brothers and the Dube brothers. The ruling party affiliated Maketo brothers were allegedly active in disturbing opposition party rallies in Kwekwe at the start of 2022, where opposition members were injured and/or killed.[139] It was not easy to apprehend the culprits who were rumored by many citizens in Kwekwe to have political protection from the higher echelons of the state. This kind of relationship between the state and artisanal mining active groups was corroborated in an interview with one 22-year-old

[136] M. K. Huggins, "Introduction: Vigilantism and the state? A look south and north", *Vigilantism and the State in Modern Latin America: Essays on extra-legal violence,* 1991, pp. 1-18.
[137] G.Mkodzongi, "The rise of 'Mashurugwi' machete gangs and violent conflicts in Zimbabwe's artisanal and small-scale gold mining sector," pp. 1480-1489.
[138] Ibid.
[139] *The Newsday*, 28 February, 2022.

artisanal gold miner and a resident of Grasslands area where there is lots of mining and also lots of violence.[140]

> It is a tough game my sister, they are not just *mbimbos*, they are also connected to the chiefs at the top, and hence there is nothing you can do to them. If you find a policeman that arrests them, that officer is new in Kwekwe. Police who have been in Kwekwe for a long time know who to arrest and who not to arrest.[141]

This shows that the ruling party has managed to monopolise the artisanal gold mining sector and make the artisanal gold miners a violent tool against opponents. But at the same time, the miners' presence was not passive as they used their position and relationship with the party-state in order to forward their social, economic and political interests. The use of artisanal miners' positions to forward their interest will be discussed in full detail in the next chapter of this dissertation.

Kwekwe Members of Parliament

This section examines the profiles of politicians who contested for the Member of Parliament position in Kwekwe from the year 2000. It reveals that the competitors from the ruling party could engage into anything including the use of strong violence in their bid to get the Member of Parliament position. Artisanal miners were never left out for they were considered important in channeling this violence. The political figures and their relationship to the ruling party is compiled in the table in appendix 3.[142]

Appendix 3:

Year	ZANUPF candidate	MDC /CCC candidate	Results	Winner
2000	Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa	Blessing Chebundo	`	MDC

[140] Interview with anonymous artisanal gold miner, 7 March, 2022.
[141] Ibid.
[142] See Appendix 3.

2005	Emmerson Mnangagwa	Blessing Chebundo		MDC
2008	Masango Matambanadzo	Blessing Chebundo		MDC
2013	Masango Matambanadzo	Blessing Chebundo		ZANU PF
2018	Masango Matambanadzo	Blessing Chebundo		ZANU PF
2023	John Mapurazi	Judith Tobaiwa		CCC

List of political figures in Kwekwe since 2000

As shown in the table, MDC, represented by Blessing Chebundo, won the parliamentary seat in Kwekwe from the year 2000 up to 2008. He broke the record by trouncing his opposition competitor, the most influential and powerful ZANU PF figure, Mnangagwa, twice in 2000 and in 2005 parliamentary elections. During these elections Chebundo suffered gross violence at the hands of ZANU PF militia, including beatings, attempted assassination and arson, forcing him into hiding for long spells.[143]

The same pattern of violence and intimidation prevailed from one election to the next. In 2013, Masango Matambanadzo, a former gold buyer and a primary school dropout, surprised many by defeating Chebundo who had gained popularity by defeating Mnangagwa. As a long time gold buyer, Matambanadzo had a strong connection to the artisanal gold miners, and the poor communities which appreciated his philanthropic streak. Unlike other politicians who, after climbing the political ladder, moved from high-density suburbs (formerly known as African townships) to the low-density suburbs (formerly whites-only suburbs during colonialism) where people of their class are expected to reside, Matambanadzo remained in Amaveni one of the

[143] See M. Meredith, "Mugabe's misrule: And how it will hold Zimbabwe back." *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 97, No. 2, 2018,pp.129-138, https://www.amnesty.org/en/wpcontent/uploads/2021/06/afr460142000en.pdf, https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/report/16173/zimbabwe-winning-mdc-candidate-hiding (Both Accessed 15 October 2022)

poorest suburbs in Kwekwe.[144] He maintained his connections with the artisanal gold miners as they saw him as their own, this also increased their loyalty and support for him. Many were confessing that just as Chebundo who had left his original home and relocated to the low density surburb of Masasa Park, they thought after gaining a parliamentary position Matambanadzo was going to change his personality and create new connections with the upper social classes, but he showed love and humility by remaining with them. "People often wonder why I decided to reside in a house at the back of my shop where my new parliamentary office is. I chose Amaveni Shopping Centre because that is where a lot of the people are. I do not have to stay away from the people who entrusted me with their vote and for the next five years I will make sure I do not disappoint President Mugabe. I want to champion his cause for the empowerment of locals," said Matambanadzo.[145]

In 2013 Matambanadzo also suggested that artisanal miners in Kwekwe be allowed to occupy disused mines and exploit claims that were lying idle as a way of earning a living. He explained his contribution to the artisanal gold mining sector: "I was personally instrumental in the increase in gold production by artisanal miners in the country, and the rise in gold production was due to my ideas. These are not fibs, and I even have proof of the documents with stamps. I only have Grade Two education, but I authored all those documents."[146] Although there are no records that show Matambanadzo's use of artisanal miners in electoral violence, he "bought loyalty", a term used by historian Towriss, through owning mining claims and controlling access to the pits. The miners, apparently, were always willing to use physical force to defend Matambanadzo's political interests.

Artisanal miners were not just used against ZANU PF's political rivals, but ZANU PF politicians also used their connections to artisanal miners to maintain or advance their position in the ZANU PF structure. In 2014 reports and newspapers wrote about a fist fight that happened between MP

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[144] Amaveni Township and Mbizo Township, for example, are low-cost housing areas. These two poor settlements were established during the colonial era, and they were built near mines for the use of mineworkers, manufacturing industries, and the most popular enterprises, particularly local taverns known as beer halls, cater to this customer base. Low density suburbs, such as Masasa Park and New Town, where the whites people's residential areas. These were and still are the wealthiest suburbs. Once one becomes rich, most of them move to stay the low density suburbs.
[145]See,https://www.facebook.com/349574648432401/posts/the-history-of-kwekwe-mp-masango-blackmanmatambanadzoin-a-typical-rags-to-riches/584311564958707/ (Accessed 30 April 2022)
[146] *The Standard*, 3 June, 2018.

Matambanadzo and former Minister of state security, Owen Ncube.[147] The allegations were that Minister Ncube always fought for his relatives to hold the parliamentary position in Kwekwe instead of Matambanadzo. While Ncube denied the allegation, Matambanadzo claimed that Ncube came to Amaveni Shopping Centre where Matambanadzo stayed and started addressing the youths instructing them to burn Matambanadzo's car and shop, claiming that the Kwekwe MP was not loyal to the party and its leadership. It is alleged that Ncube is also connected to the artisanal gold miners and the leader of Alshabaab and Maketo group, the most violent artisanal gold miners in Kwekwe.[148]

After Matambanadzo's demise in 2020, Ncube's nephew, Energy 'Dhala' Ncube, invested in taking over the Kwekwe parliamentary seat to replace Matambanadzo. He enlisted the services of artisanal miners and militia groups such as Alshabab and Maketo brothers in this endeavor. On the other hand, Kandros Mugabe, Dhala's rival for the ZANU PF parliamentary seat, had a backup of artisanal gold miners as well. As a mine owner and a sponsor for the artisanal gold miners, he had artisanal miners from his BD mine as supporters. Sloganeering in the public bars of Amaveni and Mbizo where most artisanal miners and the informal sector take some drinks after work was one of Kandros's strategies to fight his competitor both from the ZANU PF party and the opposition CCC[149] So competitive was this electoral run that even members of the same party were fighting among themselves. The question arose, if ZANU PF candidates and supporters could seek to deploy violence against their party colleagues, what would be the fate of opposition candidates and supporters.[150]

A ZANU PF resolution, however, disqualified Energy Dhala and Kandros Mugabe from the bye-elections due to escalated intraparty violence that had artisanal miners at the centre.[151] The two

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[147]See,https://nehandaradio.com/2014/07/14/zanu-pf-infighting-sparks-fist-fight-kwekwe/ https://allafrica.com/stories/201407150340.html (Accessed 19 July 2022), Also see *The Chronicles*, 17 July, 2014.

[148] See *Newsday*, 6 August 2014, L. Gumbo, and M. Musiiwa, Zanu-PF legislators trade blows, https://nehandaradio.com/zanu-pf-legislators-trade-blows/15 July 2014 (Accessed 12 February 2022)

[149] See video of Kandros Mugabe sloganeering in a local bar where most artisanal miners and people in the informal sector drink https://twitter.com/Kandros_Mugabe/status/1012259114330873856 (Accessed 10 February 2022) Also see Energy Dhala adressing Artisanal miners at globe and phoenix mine https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=325971609535954&set=pcb.325974969535618 (Accessed 9 May 2022)

[150] *Business day*, 2005.

[151]See S. Muchena, Machete Gang disrupts ZANU PF Kwekwe Provincial Election, https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-213377.html, 31 December 2021, (Accessed 30 April 2022); J. Ncube, Violent ZANU PF officials disqualified ahead of by elections, https://www.thezimbabwemail.com/zimbabwe/violent-zanu-pf-officials-disqualified-ahead-of-by-elections/ 17 June 2019 (Accessed 11 February 2022)

candidates were replaced by John Mapurazi, another ZANU PF politician and ex-deputy mayor of Kwekwe central constituency.[152]

Conclusion

Artisanal mining has become very widespread in Zimbabwe mainly because of the collapse of other economic sectors and means to sustain livelihoods. Its pervasiveness has reconfigured Zimbabwe's social, economic and political fundamentals. But the central argument of this chapter is that violence in its many forms is key to the social and political organization of artisanal mining communities, and the state is hugely enfolded in the violence. However, unlike the received ideas of state-sponsored violence in which the state uses the muscle of its formal institutions such as the army, police, prisons and others, the Zimbabwean state also employs informal channels and informal networks such as those established by informal traders and informal miners to practice violence. Such informal practices by the state, ironically, are most obvious during the political contestations like elections, and public political performances such as rallies. What is important to highlight is that fear and coercion of the artisanal miners is well-acknowledged, but the violence supporting and violence-producing relationship between the state and the miners is sometimes mutually beneficial. The state expands its power, through expanding its hold on resources and political constituencies, and the artisanal miners access resources such as the mines and gold markets but also increase their social and political visibility. I have also tried to show that the discourses and practices of violence are not just strategic and planned on the part of the state and ruling party, but can be seen in the experiences of ordinary life as people pursue their everyday businesses. Violence, hence, also manifests in the way people joke, in rumors, songs in discussion about the mythical, about morality, in dress, in street language, in virtually all facets of everyday in a mining setting.

[152]Staff reporter, Chamisa Kwekwe Central MP Challenges Mnangagwa, Gold Barons, https://www.zimeye.net/2022/03/29/chamisa-kwekwe-central-mp-challenges-mnangagwa-gold-barons/ 29 March 2022 (Accessed 30 March 2022)

Chapter Three

Artisanal gold miners, criminality and party politics

Introduction

In a world with limited or unequal distribution of resources, humans have engaged in various forms of competition for material goods. Winners and losers, or access and lack thereof, are determined by the amount of power and influence an individual possesses or is willing to exercise. There are five power bases, according to the thesis of social phsycologists French and Raven.[153] They referred to "legitimate power" (depending on one's position in a society or organisation), "referent power" (resulting from personal acceptance by others), "expert power" (whose source is one's skills or knowledge), "reward power" (resulting from the ability to grant people what they desire), and "coercive power" (speaking to ability to force people to do certain things even against their will).[154] This chapter examines the final source of power, coercive power. This comes closest to explaining how artisanal miners in Kwekwe utilised their capacities to engage in seemingly non-political, everyday violence. As the chapter will reveal, however, all of the aforementioned elements of power fused to generate a "violent *mukorokoza*" who was "powered" by the position they held, society's capitulation to the violence. Some *Makorokoza'*s "expertise" in violence can also be related to the machismo of mining environment, especially associated with the emotionally and physically exhausting routines, as well as the "rewards" they offer community members, namely material goods and the privilege of not being physically attacked.

This chapter focuses on a class of miners known in Shona as "*mbimbo*" (literally "giants" or "the physically strong"). This feared group would not only engage in workplace-related violence against their fellow miners, but also against "civilians,"[155] that is, the broader populace, including their spouses, thereby bolstering their fearsome image in various areas. People could be beaten, wounded, or murdered for matters ranging from the substantial to the petty. This chapter contends, however, that there was a political dimension to the violence: the offenders' freedom, recklessness,

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[153] M. Kovach, "Leader influence: A research review of French and Raven's (1959) power dynamics." *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership,* Vol. 13, No. 2, 2020, p. 15.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Non-mining people or non-mining cases of violence were referred to by artisanal miners as "civilian", suggesting that they considered themselves soldiers/combatants existing in a war situation.

and lack of legal or other consequences pointed to a larger political context, specifically the involvement of the ruling ZANU-PF party. They were untouchables, shielded by, or from party-state institutions such as the police and the judiciary, a circumstance that contributed to the cycle of violence in the town of Kwekwe. Their protection was captured in the mantra "*vana vemusangano*" (children of the party [ZANU PF), who were a useful instrument especially during political campaigns. Thus, the police was caught between the requirements of upholding the rule of law and avoiding alienating the violent artisanal miners, who facilitated a useful electoral constituency.

Artisanal miners and criminality

One morning in June of 2014, news spread across the suburb of Amaveni in the city of Kwekwe that a man had been discovered dead less than 50 metres from Calvary Bottle Store, a famous beer drinking establishment at the main shopping centre. His murder stunned the community not because of its occurrence, as murders of this nature were not uncommon, but because of its brutality. In addition to several knife wounds all over his body, the young man's abdomen was ripped open, revealing his internal organs.[156] According to witnesses speaking at the crime scene, the offenders used machetes and pocket knives to murder a victim who was earlier in the night seen enjoying some drinks. Some individuals claimed to have known him for many years. A few months prior to his death, he had arrived in Kwekwe to join the city's artisanal mining population. Throughout the tragic evening, characteristic of "loaded" makorokoza, he "frivolously" spent a great deal of money on both friends and strangers.[157] The money was proceeds from his mining operations at the nearby Globe and Phoenix mine. At 3:00 a.m., the deceased decided to leave the store, likely enroute to his residence. He was pursued by a gang of mbimbos, who, after a few metres of tracking him, ambushed him and stole all the cash he was carrying. There was evidence

[156] The researcher, staying less than five minutes away, visited the scene of the murder during that morning before the body had been moved.

[157] *The Standard*, 13 October, 2002. The cash, which is hard earned given the dangerous nature of their trade, must be promptly and ostentatiously spend usually at night clubs and especially in the presence of several girlfriends and many colleagues. For detailed anthropological discussion on the role prodigality among artisanal miners see A. Walsh, "Hot money" and daring consumption in a northern Malagasy sapphire-mining town, *American ethnologist*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2003, pp, 290- 305 and K. Werthmann, "Frivolous squandering: Consumption and redistribution in mining camps" In J. Abbink and A. van Dokkum (eds.), *Dilemmas of development: Conflicts of interest and their resolutions in modernizing Africa*, Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2008, p. 60.

of an intense struggle at the murder scene.[158] Some of my informants asserted that the culprits were well-known in the community.

In January 2022, during the current research, a group of around four *mbimbos* engaged a taxi driver to carry them from one location to another. Even though he had no close connections with them, he knew them as artisanal miners who resided in the same community as him. When they signaled that they had reached their destination, they exited the vehicle and left without payment. Upon requesting payment, he was shown concealed machetes and threatened with death. They dared the motorist to report anywhere he wished, even to report at the nearby police station.[159] In an incident of domestic abuse in August 2022, Sinikiwe Ndaba's spouse badly battered her. The beating was so terrible that she needed medical attention. She proceeded to the police station to file a report, and officers subsequently summoned the offender. Sinikiwe's expectations for justice were dashed when she found out that the majority of police officers at the station were acquainted with her husband and had social connections with him. Actually, one of the police officers had the perpetrator's number stored in his own cellphone. He invited the husband to the police station by calling him. The police and the suspect, who was wearing a ZANU PF T-shirt, engaged in a lengthy conversation on personal matters, including their drinking sessions. As the weekend was approaching, they even discussed where they would be drinking throughout the weekend. When the conversation switched to the topic brought up by the wife, they were told to go home and be peaceful with one another, with no further consequences for the husband.[160] These are some of the hundreds of instances in which *mbimbos* committed acts of violence against other miners or "civilian" (non-mining) members of the town, utilising nearly all of the "power base" in French and Raven's thesis.[161] I will revisit the topic of domestic violence in latter parts of the chapter.

There were temporal and spatial patterns in the violent conduct and experiences of the artisanal miners under consideration. The activities associated with dispossessing people of their material and monetary belongings tended to rise during the "off-season" of the mining industry and away from the places of work, particularly in the residential areas. During the mining season (that is the

[158] Interview with Ngoni, 23 May, 2022.
[159] Interview with Brighton Nhleya, 27 May, 2022.
[160] Interview with Sinikiwe Ndaba, 16 June, 2022.
[161] The *Sunday news*, 7 November 2021. https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_zimbabwean-artisanal-miners-fear-resurgence-violence/6198860.html (Accessed 3 March 2023) https://greatdykenews24.co.zw/makorokoza-violence-worries-mazvihwa-community/(Accessed 7 March 2023).

dry season), incidents involving interpersonal violence, alcohol-fueled assaults, and murder tended to escalate at mines and entertainment venues, such as taverns. The majority of artisanal mining is seasonal. During the wet season (September/October to March/April in Zimbabwe), it is highly unsafe to engage in artisanal shaft mining. Extremely degraded in terms of structural stability, the high water table and poor safety management make these shafts certain deathtraps.[162] Not only is it the season when artisanal mines are most likely to collapse, but they are also filled with water, and pumping it out to allow work to continue is a costly endeavour that the poorly financed informal activities struggle to fulfil. As a result of not addressing the source of mine collapses, the death toll is frequently high, yet such "accidents" are likely to occur annually and with the same severity. Because of the negligence and oversights, during the research most artisanal miners could not work during the rainy season, or could only do so at great risk to health and life. In the absence of money and other resources from mining, people engage in less lucrative on-surface mining and other non-mining economic activity, such as farming, illegal hunting of small game in adjacent farms and wildlife parks, and other informal economic activities. Others resort to selling their personal property, such as televisions, beds, refrigerators, cellphones, and vehicles, in the hopes of purchasing a new set of property once the mining season resumes. Indeed, this was the norm for many individuals. Others, however, resorted to criminal activity, specifically muggings, burglaries, and robberies. During the dry, mining-friendly season (May to September/October), there was an almost complete reversal of this tendency. This resulted in a rise in mining activity and, consequently, a related increase in income for many. Increased disposable money led to the purchase of household property, cars, mobile phones, clothing, and even cattle. As previously alluded to and as will be elaborated upon in the following section, this was accompanied by a number of social vices, the most significant of which were an increase in alcohol abuse, public violence, and gender violence.

As already indicated, artisanal mining is political. This political observation helps in avoiding the imaginary of a haphazard descent into chaos, where there are no overriding political structural forces. Some perpetrators of violent and criminal activities in Kwekwe's artisanal mining sector had powerful connections in the political, police, and judicial systems, which they encountered every day. Mkodzongi demonstrated that the political connection was especially maintained by the

[162]https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/a-fatal-accident-in-zimbabwe-reveals-the-costs-of-informal-gold-mining (Accessed 02 February 2022).

fact that politicians would always require the political capabilities of artisanal miners; to deploy them when and when violence was required to achieve political aims.[163] Due to this background, an edition of *The Standard* newspaper defined artisanal miners, particularly the mbimbo category, as having gained the status of "untouchables". When intimidating residents, the police, and the judiciary, artisanal miners would invoke the ZANU PF party and the names of politicians. During the 2003 mayoral elections between ZANU PF and MDC, the candidate for ZANU PF, Stanford Bonyongwe, compelled the police to release artisanal miners who had robbed a truck carrying gold ore *en route* to the mills. Three of the eight were campaign members for Bonyongwe. The Kwekwe Central Police Station received the instruction, "*Vavhurirei, vana vemusangano*" which translates to "Release them, they are party children".[164] Indeed, the police immediately complied with the command. Therefore, there was a frightening combination of common criminal activity, artisanal mining, and politics.

Even when politicians or government officials were not involved in some of the lawbreaking and violence committed by artisanal miners in Kwekwe, the status, influence, reputation, and power that artisanal miners were building for and around themselves enabled them to intimidate members of the general public without fear of institutional reprisals. In April 2014, an intoxicated artisanal miner was engaged in a hit-and-run road accident. The following day, he was arrested and scheduled to appear in court. To the amazement of many, including the police, artisanal miners gathered at ZANU PF headquarters, donned party regalia, and marched to Kwekwe Central Police Station and the magistrates' courts, claiming that top police personnel and magistrates were agents of MDC party.[165] While the case's progression is unclear, it points towards a clear tendency of individuals and groups using politics to avoid accountability.

This newly-acquired status of artisanal miners terrified vulnerable citizens who lacked institutional backing to defend themselves. Some interviews with Amaveni residents revealed a pattern of avoiding reporting their cases to the police. While many did not report artisanal miner transgressors since their cases rarely proceeded up the judicial ladder, many others hoped they would just evade the *mbimbos*' path. They would simply take it and move on, persuaded that reporting to law

[163] G. Mkodzongi, "The rise of Mashurugwi machete gangs and violent conflicts in Zimbabwe's artisanal and small-scale gold mining sector." *The Extractive Industries and Society*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2020, p. 1481.
[164] *The Standard*, 14 December, 2003.
[165] Interview with former policer officer, 28 May, 2022.

enforcement authorities, many of whom were ZANU PF sympathisers, gained jobs through party connections, were victims of its coercive politics, or benefited from its patronage networks.[166] Seeking their arrest or confronting them became not just "a waste of time," but also an invitation for reprisals.[167] If someone had the courage to report the mbimbos to the police and get them arrested, the politicians would intervene and have them released without consulting the victims: "These are our boys; please release them".[168] The study discovered a number of instances in which victims did not bother to report crimes. The two former police officers I interviewed cited numerous instances in which this occurred. Some mbimbos boasted to the researcher about this predicament and described the numerous times in the past when a phone call set them free; "*Maboss emusangano anongofona kuti siyai munhu iyeye, ndewedu, anopisa*" (Party bosses will call and order the person's release since he or she is a 'hot potato').[169] One could argue that although some of the mbimbos' violent and criminal activities were motivated by personal gain, they had the support of the Zimbabwe ruling party-state. On this front, the gold fortunes of Kwekwe became more of a scourge than a blessing for many of its citizens.

The emerging sociopolitical dynamics made it easier for Mbimbos to utilise their new status to resolve personal disputes. Estranged personal relationships, "pub" arguments, outstanding debts, high school grudges, failed business transactions, petty jealousies, and feuding neighbours, among other societal areas of friction, were "settled" in artisanal-cum-political fashion. A local businessman described living in "continuous anxiety" after a group of artisanal miners "promised" him physical harm. His "crime" was being in a relationship with a woman who dated one of the miners a few months earlier. Leaving this relationship would resolve his problem, he stated.[170] On the other hand, a property owner endured nearly a year of terrible emotional harassment for attempting to expel an unruly artisanal mining tenant from her home. The tenant and approximately fifteen of his associates would have loud, all-night parties at the residence, sit on the sidewalk, and cause damage to the property. They would be, interestingly, displaying their machetes and other weapons. The tenant was issued an eviction order, but it was never carried out. Actually, he left of his own volition and on his own terms. After defeating a member of a particular mbimbo group in

[166] Interview with anonymous, Mbizo 16 resident, 13 June, 2022.
[167] Several interviews with anonymous, Mbizo and Amaveni residents, June and July, 2002.
[168] Interview with Gidza, artisanal gold miner, 18 June, 2022.
[169] Interview with John, gold buyer at globe and phoenix mine, 15 June, 2022.
[170] Interview with Boss Jemu, Kwekwe businessman, 6 June, 2022.

a fistfight in 2011, Simbai Sigauke said that he was compelled to purchase alcohol for the group's members. "Every time they see me, they want a drink," he added. "Sometimes I buy, and other times I promise to buy the next time I see them".[171] Other non-mining individuals would also employ the "services" of artisanal miners to, among other things, demand the payback of debts or evict troublesome tenants. Sigauke reasoned, "What would you do if someone had around eleven charges of grievous bodily harm and attempted murder filed against them, yet they are walking scotfree... and this individual is at the centre of ZANU PF's violent politics? Who do you report to?"[172] These horrific acts of aggression and criminality, as well as the victims' inability to oppose them, were manifestly couched in terms of party politics.

It should be emphasised that even when the political elites of ZANU PF, the police, and the judiciary desired to prosecute violent artisanal miners, their hands were tied. Such interests competed with political considerations, but were frequently trumped by them. This scenario was exacerbated during election seasons, as proven throughout the thesis. Artisanal miners have repeatedly demonstrated that they are a vital electoral group that ZANU PF would be unwise to alienate. This was consistent with the fact that the majority of state actors, particularly in the police and judiciary, had been thoroughly drawn into the broad political agenda of power retention by the ruling party. They retreated from the desired level of professionalism in light of the largely effective use of political carrots and sticks. In the majority of cases involving artisanal miners who invoked party politics and where the evidence was so overwhelming that it was difficult to sweep the matter under the rug, the culprits were granted lenient sentences. It was either an insignificant fine at the police station or a suspended sentence in court. For instance, on February 27, 2022, suspected mbimbos acting as ZANU PF party youths physically assaulted Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) political party members gathered at Mbizo Shopping Centre in Kwekwe; one CCC supporter was murdered.[173] Some of the attackers were arrested but were quickly released on bail and the case was widely seen as likely to crumble. In early March of 2017, three artisanal miners were arraigned for violently injuring a fellow patron at a beer establishment. Despite the fact that the witnesses classified the brutality as attempted murder, the courts downgraded the offence, and

[171] Interview with Simbai Sigauke, artisanal gold miner, 3June, 2022.
[172] Interview with Boss Jemu, Kwekwe businessman, 6 June, 2022.
[173] *The Newsday*, 4 march, 2022.

the culprits received only a suspended sentence.[174] In all instances, popular opinion pointed to ZANU PF intervention in law enforcement and judiciary issues. Every five years, Zimbabwe holds national general elections, with each election campaign bringing various forms of conflict and violence.[175]

Zimbabwe's policies on artisanal and small-scale mining have been widely viewed as proactive since the 1990s, particularly within the contexts of poverty alleviation and environmental regulation.[176] The advent of widespread artisanal mining overwhelmed the government's ability to implement such policies.[177] Beginning in the year 2000, the government's approach was haphazard and *ad hoc*, and for years it alternated between prohibiting and tolerating it. In 2006, the prohibition on artisanal mining was the first big measure that captured the attention of the general public. The government's "*Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*" [artisanal mining is over] involved the police and courts, who arrested and imprisoned thousands of those who continued to mine for gold in defiance of this policy. The countrywide crackdown, which lasted three years and affected almost two million people who directly or indirectly relied on artisanal mining, resulted in the arrest of more than 25,000 individuals.[178] In Kwekwe, where tens of thousands of unemployed Zimbabweans had turned to artisanal gold panning in order to survive the country's collapsing economy, and tens of thousands more on its numerous spinoffs, the repercussions were evident. Used to having money most of the time, artisanal miners increasingly joined the ranks of criminals. The number of robberies, home invasions, muggings, and carjackings increased.[179] For a great number of others, this was their only means of survival.

In 2012, the situation shifted. Minister of Mines and Mining Development, Obert Mpofu, referred to artisanal miners as "national heroes," advocated for the abolition of Operation Chikorokoza Chapera, and urged the government to release all detained artisanal miners. He portrayed them as contributing significantly to the economy. President Mugabe provided an affirmative response to

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[174] Interview with Mrs Dongo, the victim's mother, 19 June, 2022.
[175] O. Dodo et al, "Youth violence and weapon mapping: A survey of youth violence in selected districts in Zimbabwe." *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, Vol. 29, No. 7, 2019, pp. 954-969.
[176] J. S. Spiegel, "Resource Policies and Small-Scale Gold Mining in Zimbabwe" *Resources policy,* Vol. 34, Issue. 1-2, pp. 39-44.
[177] Ibid.
[178] J. S. Spiegel, "Legacies of a nationwide crackdown in Zimbabwe: Operation chikorokoza chapera in gold mining communities." *The Journal of Modern African Studies,* Vol. 52, No. 4, 2014, pp. 541-570.
[179] *The Chronicle*, 15 June, 2006.

this request.[180] In 2012, following the president's proclamation, artisanal gold mining was "legalised," restoring the ties between artisanal miners and ZANU PF politicians. For election mobilisation and politically instrumental violence, politicians needed the support of artisanal miners. They made promises and provided them with access to the gold-bearing pits. For artisanal miners, the return of their status and authority was a chance to obtain concessions from politicians, such as immunity from arrest and prosecution. This return of artisanal miners occurred in the backdrop of ZANU PF's poor performance in the 2008 general elections. In the 2008 election, ZANU PF did so poorly by its standards that it nearly lost power to the MDC and only escaped by engaging in extreme violence. Some members of the party reasoned that without the conscious and coordinated mobilisation of artisanal miners, the party would continue to suffer defeats and eventually lose power. Prior to the 2013 elections, artisanal miners had to be brought to the centre of electoral processes. It appears that artisanal miners were likewise interested in this symbiosis. The economic rationale was that it would compensate for, among other things, the government's inability to create millions of formal jobs, formal mining ventures' severely reduced gold output levels, and tax revenue losses.[181]

It is essential to recognise that artisanal miners were not a homogeneous mass. Not everyone was a criminal, and not everyone was interested in political matters. Some entered artisanal mining for the sole purpose of making a living, oblivious to the political parties and electoral climate. One individual stated,

> I only began artisanal mining because I was stuck. I required funds to finish my university education. I took a gap year, saved enough money to cover two academic years, and then returned to school. I never went back to artisanal mining.[182]

He claimed to have never been involved in politics or pointless violence. Another one said that he would never become engaged in politics or "shed blood". He simply desired to "work hard for my family without causing anyone harm".[183] However, as a ZANU PF youth, he was coerced into

[180] *The Newsday*, 21 May, 2012.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Interview with Inno, former artisanal gold miner, 15 June, 2022.
[183] Interview with Pepsani, artisanal gold miner, 4 June, 2022.

partaking in all forms of violence, he argued. During times when the gold fields were unproductive or during the rainy season, he had little choice but to join the machete-wielding mbimbos. If he was not doing this, he was conducting errands for ZANU PF that would elevate his status and profile, which he would subsequently use for social and economic gain. They would be assigned tasks such as putting up ZANU PF campaign posters or distributing T-shirts and caps. Once people witnessed him committing this act, their perception of him would change, typically to one of dread and respect. Depending on one's perspective, politics became a secondary or even primary source of livelihood for many artisanal miners. While this relationship between the party and artisanal mining provided him with a few groceries, others were more entrepreneurial and obtained cars, houses, shops, and land.[184] Some artisanal gold miners had prospects for social, political, and economic advancement.

Working-site politics and artisanal miner violence

The violence committed by artisanal miners, specifically the *mbimbo* group, was not limited to "civilians". The "pits,", in other words, the miner's workplaces, were beset with violence of a higher order than that observed in bars and townships. The stakes were sufficiently high to match the brutality. At the pits, violence occurred in all forms and manner. Among other horrible deeds, it featured stabbings, knife attacks, pushing individuals into shafts, some of which would be flooded, the theft of gold and gold ore, and torture. Similarly diverse were the origins and causes of the violence. Typically, it involved groups competing for workspace and work time, attempting to steal gold ore from other groups, or settling conflicts and grudges amongst individual group members. Often, separate groups rotate through a shaft at set and agreed intervals, but groups and people who appeared to be weaker frequently fell prey to stronger and larger groups.

However, the *mbimbo* groups posed the greatest threat in the actual mining regions, including the residential compounds. They would undertake violent raids for gold, refuse to leave the mines when their time was up, evict weaker groups from the mines before their time was up, and determine who would and who would not work in the mines. If a group had a member they disliked for whatever reason, they would be compelled to expel him. Frequently, they responded violently to resistance to their declarations. Violence was more severe and intense during moments of gold

[184] Interview with former artisanal miner, 3 July, 2022.

rush, that is, when new gold shafts are discovered attracting a frenzy of opportunity seekers besides the seasoned artisanal miners. In September 2008, approximately 25 mbimbos waited for another group of about five individuals to complete their shift at Venice Mine. Upon completion, the *mbimbo* group, each member of which was armed with a machete, had a truck prepared to transport the gold ore. The smaller group offered no resistance.[185] Throughout the 2000s, there were multiple instances at Globe and Phoenix and Gaika mines of people being thrown into flooded shafts after their gold or gold ore was disposed of or after they attempted to oppose more powerful gangs. The Maketo gang was one of numerous notorious groups. Jack Madongo, a longtime artisanal miner unaffiliated with any organisations, claimed that he had observed numerous beatings and deaths at the mines over the years. He remembered an incident that occurred at the Gaika Mine shaft in 2006:

> They wanted Yuda to hand up his gold-rich stones in a plastic bag, but he refused. They stabbed him twice in the feet without hesitation and threatened to stab his upper body and throw him down the shaft if he continued to resist. He conformed.[186]

In a separate occurrence, a Mbimbo gang asked another worker to leave the shaft while their shift was still in progress. "When the other group argued that their time had not expired, they began hurling boulders into the shaft, compelling the victim group to beg for their lives and exit".[187] Those who were spared bodily harm were prohibited from mining and forced to seek out new mining areas elsewhere. This is but a sample of the dozens of incidents that informants shared with the researcher.

It is difficult to draw a connection between the daily and frequent occurrence of this violence and the larger picture of partisan politics. In spite of this, politics played some role in the violence at the pits, and in the mining district at large. The most dreaded individuals at the mines were, coincidentally, the same individuals who led ZANU PF's electoral mobilisation efforts. Some served as commissars, chairs, and secretaries of the party's cells and branches, as well as its election agents. It explains why the majority of victims never contacted the police and why the

[185] Interview with Dennis Sigauke, artisanal gold miner, 15 July 2022.
[186] Interview with Jack Madongo, artisanal gold miner, 26 June 2022.
[187] Ibid.

criminals were never arrested. The victims' situation would worsen if the mbimbos labelled them as opposition political supporters. They often used this tag. After its use, both the police and the courts would be reluctant to pursue cases. Consequently, violence in the mines typically went unpunished.

Artisanal gold miners and domestic violence

Violence associated with artisanal mining was so frequent and ubiquitous such that it could not be confined to public spaces and mine shafts. The growth in domestic and gender-based violence began to be associated with artisanal miners. In Kwekwe, it was common to hear statements, tags, and warnings such as "*makorokoza anorova vakadzi*" (artisanal miners beat their wives), "*ungadanane nemukorokoza!*" (how dare you date an artisanal miner!), "*ungalojesa mukorokoza!*" (how dare you accept an artisanal miner as a tenant!), and the gross, "*makorokoza dzinenge mhuka!*" (artisanal miners are like animals). It was usual to be discouraged from close association with artisanal miners. The rationale was particularly evident in instances of domestic violence. Some proof was found in clinics and police stations. A nurse bemoaned the number of cases involving women who were married to or dating artisanal miners she had treated over the years: "They come without teeth, with damaged limbs, and some on the verge of death. Unfortunately, the majority of them do not wish to report their perpetrators to the police. Sometimes we must force them to cooperate".[188] A police official at the Amaveni Police station echoed these comments, but with sweeping generalizations: "It is impossible to classify artisanal miners as human beings. Women are severely beaten by their husbands for trivial offences such as preparing a meal without meat, questioning why he arrived home late, and failing to calm a crying baby".[189] She retrieved a file containing photographs of domestic abuse victims with severe injuries, the majority of them were artisanal miners. Many of the charges and causes of the violence stemmed from disputes over money, with women interviewed citing difficulties such as not paying for the children's school fees, not leaving enough money for food, and not paying rent, among others. The concept of "*kugarira vana vangu*" (staying put for the sake of my children) was the motivation for many women to remain in abusive and unsafe relationships. This concept is essentially the

[188] Interview with a nurse at the Amaveni Clinic, 3 July, 2022.
[189] Interview with the police officer, 4 July 2022.

‘battered spouse syndrome’, where victims of domestic abuse feel unable to leave and move away for various reasons.

Many children in Kwekwe do not attend school for a variety of reasons, including the general education crisis in Zimbabwe, which has led to periodic school closures as teachers protest for higher compensation and better working conditions, and the inability of the parents to afford school fees. Instead, a large number of children help their families in artisanal gold mining. At a young age, many children of artisanal miners in Kwekwe would not only have actual knowledge of gold panning but would also be working to contribute to the family’s income. Many did not advance past elementary school, and those who did had difficulty completing high school. This was especially true in the Kwekwe District’s impoverished peri-urban and rural regions. Children of school age working alone or assisting their parents was a common sight on the various goldfields. They engaged in a form of surface mining known as panning, in which gold ore is washed in rivers or other makeshift bodies of water. In addition, they would locate stones containing gold or transport gold ore from one location to another. An additional aspect of violence emerges in this way, in the form of violent socialisation. When the parents or the working group to which the parents belong are involved in conflicts with other individuals or groups, the children are frequently expected to assist. One father was pleased with this training of young mbimbos:

> I have four children, three of which are boys. The oldest individual is 15 years old. Due to the high level of violence in the area, I am confident that I will be secure and that they will be able to defend themselves within three years.[190]

As would be expected of any artisanal miner, each boy carried a weapon of one sort or the other, but usually a machete.

Consequently, artisanal mining environments were also socialisation spaces. According to the Research and Advocacy Unit’s research of violence and socialisation, these children grew up and worked in a violent environment, in which they would soon, if not already, participate.[191] Not only did several of the children carry weapons, but they also used violent and inappropriate language

[190] Interview with Rambo, artisanal gold miner, 25 June 2022.
[191] Research and Advocacy Unit, "Zimbabwe–Political Violence and Elections." *Research and Advocacy Unit*, 2018.

for their age. As their social milieu was troubled with violence, it appeared they were socialised to believe that violence was the answer to most of their problems and were taught at a very young age that violence solves issues. This milieu fostered and encouraged issues such as gender violence and the degrading of women. It was instructive that artisanal miners considered as weak in terms of work or aggression, or avoidance of physical conflict were referred to as "vakadzi" (women) and "mainini" (aunt/little sister of the mother). These terms were rendered as "weaklings," "cowards," and "softies" by their counterparts. This negative portrayal of women was openly communicated to adolescents, establishing a cycle of gender discrimination and physical and emotional violence.

Alcohol and drug abuse exacerbated the violence that characterised domestic and gender landscapes in artisanal mining contexts. Observations on the ground revealed that artisanal miners encouraged one another to consume excessive amounts of alcohol, marijuana, and other psychoactive substances. According to a report by the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association, there was a direct correlation between artisanal miners' alcohol and substance abuse and high gender-based violence in mining areas.[192] In social settings frequented by artisanal miners, such as taverns and sports fields, women were referred to in terms of their subordination to men, their status as second-class members of society, and their inability to support themselves financially. Abuse of alcohol and drugs would lead to physical, sexual, and emotional aggression in the households of those with such beliefs. "As for me, I will beat a woman who doesn't listen"; "never allow a woman to trample on you"; "mine knows the consequences of disrespecting me"; and "if she misbehaves, I will drink or smoke my weed, and she will know that trouble has begun" are examples of statements recorded in informal conversations. Aspects of patriarchy, toxic masculinity (machismo) came into play and were bolstered by African cultural concepts that required women or wives to be subordinate to males or husbands.

As suggested above in this chapter, politics loomed in the backdrop even in cases of domestic violence. The social and public standing and influence of artisanal miners permeated their households. Even if the victims of domestic violence reported them, they could not be punished because of their open affiliation with the ruling party and party-sanctioned protection by and from

[192] http://www.zela.org/mining-sector-situational-report-sit-rep-8th-series-april (Accessed 30 April 2022).

state institutions. The cases were somehow downgraded, disregarded, or the victims were so frustrated by the system that they gave up. Some victims were told by close acquaintances that reporting would be "a waste of time," and consequently, many did not bother to do so. If the culprits, "the party's children," were to spend any time behind bars, it would not exceed a few days.[193] For artisanal miners, bribery of police officers, prosecutors, and magistrates to secure their release or dismiss their cases was important, but membership in and service to ZANU PF were of greater significance.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that violence is central to Kwekwe's artisanal mining environments. The violence, as exemplified by the activities of the mbimbo category, takes various manifestations, including physical, symbolic, emotional, and verbal. This was the case in terms of threats and actual perpetrations. People were injured, killed, or feared for their lives. Due to the brutality of artisanal miners, numerous people lost property. In spite of the fact that the majority of these actions were common criminal acts of artisanal miners struggling financially, striving to establish status, battling over territory, or engaging in "disciplining" violence against their spouses, they were entrenched in political circumstances. During election seasons, the political perspective was apparent. Given that hundreds of thousands of people were directly involved in artisanal mining, ZANU PF realised that it would be electorally advantageous to include them into the party. On the other hand, artisanal miners realised that they had to actively support ZANU PF, or "perform ZANU PF" as described by Grasian Mkodzongi[194], in order to continue their mining operations, which were illegal under government mining and environmental policies and laws. In this give-and-take, transactional relationship, artisanal miners, the mbimbos, were permitted to participate in indiscriminate social vices without fear of prosecution or incarceration. They became the "children of the party". Their propensity for violence was useful to ZANU PF during election seasons. They would assault, murder, or expel opposition supporters from specific communities. No one who was not a member of ZANU PF would be permitted to mine for gold, and anyone suspected of voting for opposition politics would be subjected to violence. Therefore, attempts to

[193] Several interviews with female domestic violence victims, July, 2022.
[194]G. Mkodzongi, Fast tracking land reform and rural livelihoods in Mashonaland west province of Zimbabwe: Opportunities and constraints 2000-2013, Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, *PhD dissertation*, 2013.

penalise them would backfire on the party. Domestic spheres were, however, also affected by the violence. Men in the artisanal mining industry subjected their wives, girlfriends, and other female members of society to gender-based abuse. The mbimbos were not restricted by institutional mechanisms since their membership and service to ZANU PF shielded them. As established in this chapter, there is a close connection between artisanal miners, artisanal mining, violence, and party politics. Historian Martens observes, under the Inclusive Government, the Ministry of Mines, led by a ZANU PF minister Amos Bernard Muvengwa Midzi, reversed its 2008 policy of clamping down on illegal mining and sought to extend its support to this sector.[195] Mawowa clearly sums up the political implications of these changes in the mining sector: As the economic situation worsened, the party-state patronage system has become more entrenched.[196] This has become clearer with the indigenization and empowerment policy where party affiliation is the single most important criterion for access to state-mediated economic opportunities. The party manifests itself as a localized capitalist oligarchy. The patronage accumulation attending this period has however not excluded possibilities for upward mobility among the somewhat independent miners. It is these possibilities that suggest that Zimbabwe's serious economic crisis, some things continued to work and indeed as formality declined, new accumulation paths emerged. This blurred the boundaries between legal and illegal mining, with unregulated activities becoming ensnared with bureaucratic controls and state agents.

[195] J. Martens, 'Zimbabwe Elections: What if there had been no Rigging?' *International Politics, Jan*, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Southern Africa, 2013, p. 5

[196] Mawowa, "The political economy of crises", pp. 185-6

Chapter Four

Politics leads the environment: Artisanal mining and environmental violence

Introduction

Violence has often been perceived and presented in both scholarly and non-scholarly platforms in terms of people-to-people interactions. The same approach has been adopted by scholars who have considered resource conflicts or conflicts in resource-rich contexts.[197] This chapter considers environmental violence in politicised artisanal and small-scale mining contexts of Kwekwe. According to ecologist Chu and environmentalist Karr, environmental violence is the destruction of aspects of the natural environment, or the disruption of natural environmental processes, by human social and economic activities.[198] Human social and economic activities across different local, regional, and international geographical and national boundaries have been observed over the years (and decades). This has seen rivers, dams, forests, soils, among other obvious natural features, being destroyed or negatively altered in one way or the other. However, definitions and conceptualisations of environmental violence, including the one presented above, are not only simplistic but are also a depoliticised portrayal of environmental harm. Beyond demonstrating that Kwekwe's artisanal mining activities have been intensely and extensively destructive to various facets of the natural environment, the chapter argues that there is a political dimension to this dynamic, and this exacerbated the level of violence within the city The gold extractors' quest for basic economic survival, on one hand, and politicians' quest for political power, on the other, fed into a political ecological complex that rapidly and adversely transformed the natural (and even physical) environment around the city of Kwekwe. Research on the relationship between artisanal mining and the environmental question has largely privileged the technical-financial-social problem, overlooking, or at best, giving a passing glance, to the role of politics.[199]

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[197] See L. B. Philippe, "The political ecology of war: Natural resources and armed conflicts." *Political Geography,* Vol. 20, No. 5, 2001, pp. 561-584. M. Macleans, "Application of the theories that explain the causes of civil conflicts in Zimbabwean conflicts." *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations,* Vol. 6, No. 7, 2012, pp. 142-154. And D.S. Moore, "Marxism, culture, and political ecology: Environmental struggles in Zimbabwe's eastern highlands." In R. Peet and M. Watts (Eds.), *Liberation ecologies*; *Environment, development, social movement,* Routledge: New York, 2002, pp. 137-159.

[198] E. W.Chu and J. R. Karr. "Environmental impact: Concept, conséquences, measurement." *Reference Module in Life Sciences*, 2017.

[199] See, for example, G. Hilson, "Small-scale mining in Africa: Tackling pressing environmental problems with improved strategy." *The Journal of Environment & Development*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2002, pp. 149-174. S. Mudyazhezha,

One of the major reasons for people joining artisanal mining during the early 2000s in Zimbabwe was the sector's potential as an alternative source of livelihood when the nation was plunging into a deep economic crises. Once fabled in the region and by the media as the ''Breadbasket of Africa'' in the first decade of the 2000s, Zimbabwe dramatically degenerated, suffering from collapsing industries, shortage of foreign exchange, scarce fuel supplies, absence of basic food commodities, shortage of farming chemicals, among other things. The strife, as described in the previous chapter, was exacerbated by intervening droughts.[200] Artisanal mining in informalised contexts was for most poor people one of the few open options for survival. The sheer numbers of people who joined the sector, and the rapid pace of activities and exploitation of gold resources, added to the problem of weak implementation of regulations, soon became a matter of concern. The obvious and visible characteristics were that mining was carried out in previously protected spaces such as riverbeds, conservation parks, and agricultural lands, among others. In addition, the use of chemicals such as cyanide and mercury (poisonous and environmentally harmful substances) in the purification of extracted gold was widespread and indiscriminate, and was carried out largely without regard to safety and environmental concerns.[201] Kwekwe's position as the hub of such kinds of mining, the informality of artisanal mining, in addition to the financial and political interest of the ruling party, meant that questions of environmental destruction and conservations were also points of political contestations. According to environmental historians Peluso and Watts, rather than a linear cause-and-effect linkage, problems of the environment, populations, and violence revolve around issues of *power*—not around absolute scarcity.[202] What constitutes mismanagement of natural resources, or measures to mitigate such mismanagement, is a game of political manoeuvring, negotiations, coercions and contests.[203]

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and R. Kanhukamwe. "Environmental monitoring of the effects of conventional and artisanal gold mining on water quality in Ngwabalozi River, southern Zimbabwe." *International Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences*, Vol. 4, No. 10, 2014, p. 8269. S. N. Phiri et al. "Artisanal small-scale mining: Potential ecological disaster in Mzingwane District, Zimbabwe." *Jàmbá: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2015, pp. 1-11.

[200] C. J. Richardson, "How much did droughts matter? Linking rainfall and GDP growth in Zimbabwe." *African Affairs*, Vol. 106, No. 424, 2007, pp. 463-478.

[201] Mercury is used to recover gold that is mixed with gold ore. Cyanide is used for gold purification, through a process called "leaching". See B. G. Marshall, et al "Cyanide contamination of the puyango-tumbes river caused by artisanal gold mining in portovelo-zaruma, Ecuador." *Current Environmental Health Reports*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2020, p. 303.

[202] N. L, Peluso and Michael R. Watts, eds. *Violent environments*, New York: Cornell University Press, 2001.

[203] Ibid.

Politics and power—especially unshared power—and the many ways it has manifested in Zimbabwe, has been central to environmental violence witnessed in Kwekwe. Politicians from the ruling party encouraged and authorised the unregulated mining practices of the *Makorokozas*. The main consideration was political, particularly electoral. Artisanal miners had become a vital cog in ZANU PF's electoral endeavours. Therefore, in the eyes of the state, they had become more important and convenient than stopping or regulating their free reign. ZANU PF, and the character of political power, emasculated various state agencies – including municipalities, rural district councils, those responsible for, respectively, mining, environment, and policing – from adequately addressing issues of artisanal mining-induced environmental degradation. While their mandate was clear and legally guaranteed as regards the environmental protection, authorities such as the Environment Management Agency (EMA), the Ministry of Mines and Minerals, the police, and councils, among others, had their hands tied by the political state.[204] They could not deploy their powers against gangs that destroyed the environment at will. It is largely for this reason that Kwekwe turned, almost overnight, from an environmentally tranquil and compact environment to a sight of gullies, river siltation, denuded landscapes, and poisonous water bodies.[205]

This chapter provides an examination of environmental violence in Kwekwe's artisanal and small-scale mining sector. It goes beyond analyses of interpersonal or intergroup violence so obvious to many, to consider an aspect that has escaped not only scholarly research, but also the conscious attention of the artisanal miners and those affected by it. In the majority of studies on artisanal mining, the environmental issue is treated as a technical-scientific concern, with the role of politics either ignored or only accorded cursory attention.[206] The diverse motivations of the gold miners to engage in gold extraction (which include basic economic survival, among others) and the politicians' pursuit of political power have contributed to the rapid transformation of the environment surrounding the city of Kwekwe into a political ecological complex.

[204] https://ejatlas.org/conflict/gold-panning-in-kwekwe-zimbabwe (Accessed 1 September 2022).
[205] *The Standard*, 9 January 2005. The pictures provided throughout this chapter will attest to this.
[206] See, S. N. Phiri et al. "Artisanal small-scale mining: Potential ecological disaster in Mzingwane District, Zimbabwe." 2015.

Overview of Zimbabwe's environmental history

Environmental issues have been central to Zimbabwe's precolonial, colonial and post-colonial societies and have been linked to the question of development and long-term societal wellbeing.[207] In the pre-colonial era, traditional practices existed for purposes of fostering environmental protection and sustainability. Mechanisms were put into practice to ensure sound exploitation of mineral resources as checks and balances to guard against over exploitation.[208] Management of natural resources was centrally vested in the communities and their traditional leadership.[209] Through customary beliefs and supernatural concepts of the sacred forest and totems which regulated the consumption of wildlife products, people conserved the environment.[210] Thus, the utilisation of environmental resources was achieved through a sustainable way.

Throughout most of the colonial period, the human encounter with nature and the general environment was confined by the European settlers' philosophies of dispossessing the indigenous black populations of their resources, exploiting these resources primarily for their own profit, and their own conceptions of how the environment could be controlled and dominated.[211] These methods include, during the colonial era, the centrality of environmental issues found expression through legislations such as the 1931 Land Apportionment Act and the 1951 Land Husbandry Act. The enforcement of the Land Apportionment Act led to the removal of Africans from alienated land and their confinement into the qualitatively and quantitatively restrictive reserves with the aim to undercut African competitiveness in agricultural produce markets in an attempt to protect the interests of white settler farmers. By the end of the Second World War Southern Rhodesia's 'native reserves' were said to be seriously overcrowded and overstocked.[212] An official

[207] I. Chirisa, and Muzenda, A., "Environmental rights as a substantive area of the Zimbabwean constitutional debate: Implications for policy and action" *Southern Peace Review Journal,* Vol. 2, No. 2, 2013, pp. 104-121.
[208] J. C. Mohamed-Katerere, and Chenje, M., (eds), *Environmental law and policy in Zimbabwe,* SARDAC, Harare, 2002.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid.
[211] M. Musemwa, "Land, water, and race: In search of truth and the search for environmental justice in Southern Rhodesia", G. Wynn, J. Carruthers, and N. Jacobs (eds.) *Environment, power, and justice: Southern African histories* Athens: Ohio University Press, 2022, pp 255-278: I. Chirisa, and A. Muzenda. "Environmental rights as a substantive area of the Zimbabwean constitutional debate: Implications for policy and action" pp. 104-121.
[212] I. Phimister, "Rethinking the reserves: Southern Rhodesia's Land Husbandry Act reviewed." *Journal of Southern African Studies,* Vol. 19, No. 2, 1993, pp. 225-239.

investigation found that more than half of the so-called reserves were overstocked with cattle alone by 145 per cent.[213]

In a bid to solve the problem that was caused by the Land Apportionment Act, the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951, proclaimed that indigenous black people were only allowed five head of cattle and eight acres of land.[214] By instituting the policy, the colonial government aimed at encouraging Africans to protect natural resources in their communities through limiting the number of animal stocks in reserves within their ecological areas' carrying capacity.[215] This Act dismally failed. Amongst other reasons, to most rural Africans cattle meant wealth or a form of bank in case of drought or other hard times induced by natural disasters. Destocking was resented, despite its intentions to match livestock numbers to the carrying capacity of the available pastures. The idea, according to villagers, was to egregiously limit the wealth of Africans. Essentially, the Act was an attempt to attack the problems of erosion, land fragmentation and tenure, blamed on Africans as the primary agents of such ills. The key aspect of these legislations is that they pushed indigenous Africans into the so-called 'native reserves' – geographically small, environmentally hostile, and agriculturally poor – instantly turning these zones into overpopulated areas. While the state, through its different agencies tried to mitigate the consequent intensification of environmental degradation, which included widespread deforestation, massive soil erosion, and accelerated siltation of natural and man-made water bodies.[216] Largely impoverished and with few economic opportunities and social services, and restricted to the communal areas, the African population was forced to rely extensively on the natural environment for survival. This led to the overexploitation (or abuse) of vegetation, usually for firewood, and agricultural resources such as land and water bodies. The pressure on the environment increased with the increasing population. In situations whereby survival and subsistence were the foremost consideration, and competition for resources increased each day, the situation rendered impracticable and implementable some of the historical mechanisms for environmental conservation such as slash-and-burn agriculture,

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[213] Ibid.

[214] T. M. Mashizha, and J. Mapuva. "The colonial legislation, current state of rural areas in Zimbabwe and remedial measures taken to promote rural development." *Journal of Asian and African Social Science and Humanities,* Vol. 4, No. 3, 2018, pp. 22-35.

[215] I. Makanyisa, et al, "The land tenure system and the environmental implications on Zimbabwean society: Examining the pre-colonial to post-independent Zimbabwean thinking and policies through history and philosophy." *Journal of Sustainable development in Africa,* Vol. 14, No. 6, 2012, pp. 175-183.

[216] Ibid.

seasonal hunting and cattle grazing rotations.[217] However, African activities continued to be policed by colonial environmental legislations which sought to punish those who cultivated on stream and river banks, indiscriminately cut down trees, caused overgrazing and exceeded the statutory limit of the number of livestock that could be owned. Despite the challenges, and the racialised settlement and resource use patterns, colonial Zimbabwe had a "proud record" of environmental conservation.[218]

Zimbabwe's reputation as one of the countries that took conservation issues seriously continued in the post-independence era. New laws for conserving the natural ecosystem were put into consideration. The government took the first steps that included, the publishing of Zimbabwe's National Conservation Strategy by the Natural Resource Board (NRB) in 1980 (as requested for all nations by the World Conservation Strategy report of The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)-World Wild Life Fund (WWF), 1980).[219] The global strategy emphasised the need for sustainable resource exploitation and sought to make it the focus of all social and economic development activities. Its discussion and implementation in Zimbabwe was largely in light of land degradation, soil erosion, river and dam siltation and the cutting down of trees.[220] Many statutory instruments from the 1980s through to the 2000s continued to offer a solid framework for environmental protection. For example, the Environmental Management Act (Chapter 20:27), through Statutory Instrument 103 of 2007, emphasised how natural resources had to be managed and conserved.[221] In an endeavour to curb and control environmental degradation and ecological disasters respectively, EMA was organised into two departments. These are the Environmental Protection

[217] For environmental dynamics in the reserves in the colonial era see I. Makanyisa, "The land tenure system and the environmental implications on Zimbabwean society: Examining the pre-colonial to post-independent Zimbabwean thinking and policies through history and philosophy" pp. 175-183. K. Z. Chindori-Chininga, "The case for indigenization: Analysing pre-colonial trends in agriculture and politics in Zimbabwe." *Masters diss*, Cornel University, 2021.

[218] M. Musemwa, "Zimbabwe's drift toward authoritarianism and its environmental consequences, 2000-2017", S. Brain and V. Pal (eds) *Environmentalism under authoritarian regimes: Myth, propaganda, reality* London: Routledge, 2019, pp. 191-213; G. R., Milne, and A. Hoole. "The Zimbabwe natural resources management programme and lessons in cross-cultural exchange." *The Forestry Chronicle,* Vol. 70, No. 6, 1994, pp. 704-709

[219] A. J. McNeely, *Economics and biological diversity: developing and using economic incentives to conserve biological resources*, International union for conservation of nature and natural resources: Gland, 1988.

[220] G. R., Milne, and A. Hoole. "The Zimbabwe natural resources management programme and lessons in cross-cultural exchange." pp. 704-709.

[221] P. Moyo, et al, "Press and Environmental Management Agency (EMA)'s active role in reporting and monitoring environmental degradation caused by small scale artisanal gold panning in Zimbabwe: A case of Shurugwi peri-urban" *Journal of Environment and Earth Science,* Vol. 5, No. 17, 2015, p. 99.

Department, responsible for enforcing environmental legislation and setting up of environmental quality standards, and the Environmental Management Services Department, mandated to collect, produce, and disseminate information to society through the Environmental Education and Publicity Unit and the Environmental Planning and Monitoring Unit.[222]

There are ministries and boards that were established for the regulation of environmental sustainability, these include Ministries of Mines, Local Government, Natural Resources and Environmental Management Agency, Rural District Councils and District Administrators. The EMA was mandated to supervise and oversee environmental issues with the use of statutory laws and regulations. Statutory Instrument Six of 2007 regulated environmental issues in the context of mines and mining operations. Those given mining rights by the ministry of mines and attained operating licenses from EMA had to conduct their operations in environment-friendly ways. However, these policies, instruments and bodies began to suffer ineffectiveness in the face of artisanal mining. The sheer magnitude of the activity, the numbers of people involved, and, crucially, the politics at play, provided a toxic mix for the environment. The city of Kwekwe, the hub of artisanal mining, suffered acute environmental degradation. Unlike the government's approach prior to the 2000s, when it was eager to test community-based conservation programs, and organisations such as the Forestry Commission expressed a desire for more community-based forestry policies in the early 1980s and articulated a willingness to change the law accordingly. The government did not take significant measures to alleviate the problem; instead, politicians supported the activity since they benefited from the artisanal gold miners' support. [223]

Acute poverty and unemployment amongst the people were vents of the state and ruling party's political opportunism in the city. The ruling elite used natural resources to politically maneuver within the artisanal gold mining sector, to achieve political goals. Consequently, this as well negatively impacted the environment and also the daily living experiences of the Kwekwe community.

[222] Ibid.
[223] T. M. Maravanyika, Can We Learn Our Way to Sustainable Management? Adaptive collaborative management in Mafungautsi state forest, Zimbabwe, *PhD dissertation*, Wageningen University, 2010.

Environmental degradation, artisanal mining, and ZANU PF politics

Together with the new black farmers who took possession of former white estates around Kwekwe during the government-backed land reform programme that started in 2000, thousands of artisanal miners who moved to the town and its environs from all over the country quickly became an important electoral and political base of the ruling ZANU PF.[224] For ZANU PF, a stranglehold on resource extraction activities was crucial in its attempts to overcome a surging opposition movement that had electorally taken over the majority of the country's urban centers at the turn of the millennium and maintained the dominance throughout the early years of the 2000.

Zimbabwe's mining industry was primarily governed by the Mines and Minerals Act of 1961 (and numerous other related environmental legislation), which vested the president with powers and control over all minerals and natural gases.[225] Therefore, by placing the president and presidential powers at the centre, this set up allowed ZANU PF to dominate mineral resources and disregard environment issues in this context. Following the decline in alternative sources of livelihoods, and the failure to keep its promise of creating employment for the majority – largely a product of huge disinvestment by formal economic institutions – the role of the ruling party as gatekeeper to mineral resources became critical. In this view, one may argue that minerals, in particular gold, which is easily transportable and traded, offered the quick rentals that a cornered regime desperately needed. Mineral extraction and environmental regulation became effective political instruments through which the state controlled the country's resources and suppressed the emergence of opposition movements.

Unregulated, widespread and uncontrolled informal mining is an extremely harmful activity for the environment.[226] But political considerations saw the cornered ZANU PF government

[224]See https://ejatlas.org/conflict/gold-panning-in-kwekwe-zimbabwe(Accessed 1 September 2022), S. Mawowa, "The political economy of artisanal and small-scale gold mining in central Zimbabwe." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 4, 2013, p. 929.

[225] See Zimbabwe's Mines and Mineral Act, https://old.zimlii.org/zw/legislation/act/1961/38 (Accessed 15 August 2022)

[226] This has also been established in other artisanal mining countries such as South Africa, Ghana, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone. See M. Guenther, "Local effects of artisanal mining: Empirical evidence from Ghana." In *Presentation at the international conference 'environmental economics: a focus on natural resources', Orleans*. 2018; J. P. Otamonga, and J. W. Poté. "Abandoned mines and artisanal and small-scale mining in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): Survey and agenda for future research." *Journal of Geochemical Exploration*, Vol. 208, 2020, p. 106394. P. T. Mabey etal "Environmental impacts: Local perspectives of selected mining edge communities in Sierra Leone." *Sustainability*, Vol. 12, No. 14, 2020, p. 5525.

alternating between reprimanding and punishing artisanal miner environmental predators and foregrounding the policy that artisanal mining activity was an essential component of Zimbabwe's socio-economic landscape.[227] Between 2006 and 2009, for example, the state engaged in a large-scale crackdown of artisanal mining activities. Codenamed "Operation *Chikorokoza Chapera*" (No More Illegal Mining), it set as its operational premise the idea that artisanal mining needed to be closely regulated as the sector was not only characterised by chaos but also environmental degradation.[228] Operating outside the full purview of the state and with minimal state intervention, artisanal mining had caused serious environmental damage across the country.[229] At the other end, the government was presenting artisanal miners as "heroes" who had saved the economy from collapse in the face of the 2000s pressures.[230]

In Kwekwe, access to the mines, the capacity to trade in, and use of, controlled mining substances such as mercury, cyanide, and dynamite, had no legal repercussions. Carried outside of environmental laws and expected standards, and by people determined to get the gold at all costs, the environmental consequences are not difficult to imagine. Yet, environmental violence corresponded with ZANU PF politics, and individuals and groups' proximity to it. Membership in the ruling party or, as Mkodzongi has highlighted in other contexts, "performing ZANU PF" was essential for access to certain mines.[231] One Kwekwe resident, Erikana Haurovi, demonstrated the connection between party politics, artisanal mining, and environmental violence. He had heard ZANU PF politicians sloganeering to the effect that: "If you vote for MDC there will be no more goldmining for you. Vote for ZANU PF if you want to continue mining".[232] Access to minerals through informal, unregulated, and destructive channels, depended on one's political affiliation.

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[227] S. Mawowa, "The political economy of artisanal and small-scale gold mining in central Zimbabwe." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 4, 2013, p. 934.

[228] See S. J. Spiegel, "Legacies of a nationwide crackdown in Zimbabwe: Operation chikorokoza chapera in gold mining communities." *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 4, 2014, pp. 541-570. P. Moyo, "Press and Environmental Management Agency (EMA)'s active role in reporting and monitoring environmental degradation caused by small scale artisanal gold panning in Zimbabwe: A case of Shurugwi peri-urban." *Journal of Environmental and earth science*, Vol. 5, No. 17, 2015, pp. 2224-3216.

[229] M. Dalu, et al "A call to halt destructive, illegal mining in Zimbabwe." *South African Journal of Science*, Vol. 113, No. 11-12, 2017, pp. 1-2. F. Chari, "Artisanal mining versus sustainability of agricultural food supply chains: Effects of the conflicts in southern Zimbabwe." *Development in Practice*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2022, pp. 349-360.

[230] The *Newsday*, 21 May 2012, S. J. Spiegel, "Legacies of a nationwide crackdown in Zimbabwe: Operation Chikorokoza Chapera in gold mining communities." *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 4, 2014, p. 555.

[231] G. Mkodzongi, Fast tracking land reform and rural livelihoods in Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe: Opportunities and Constraints 2000-2013, *PhD dissertation*, Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2013.

[232] *The Standard*, 21 September 2003.

By extension, affiliation to ZANU PF allowed one to exert violence on the environment without fear of consequences.

The miners were not entirely unaware of the damage they were causing to the environment. Mining, as much as possible however, was more important than environmental concerns. Hwezhaz, an artisanal miner at Gaika Mine, believed their activities were justifiable considering the harsh economic environment obtaining in Zimbabwe: "We cannot leave gold just because we want to save the environment. So, you put value in trees more than human life?"[233] The same sentiment echoed in other mining points around Kwekwe. At Unit Mine, which suffered extensive deforestation since the mid-2000s, Elijah was aware "of the consequences that our activities bring to the environment, but we just want to survive".[234] "We have to survive" was the common response to the issue of artisanal mining and environmental harm. Crucially, artisanal miners were aware that no legal consequences would befall them for indiscriminate cutting down of trees, washing cyanide and mercury in the rivers, and processing and dumping gold ore in the rivers. Moreover, they were cognisant that politics was on their side. One, cheekily responded to the environmental question:

> On what basis are you questioning us about the environmental problems when the government itself has no problem with what we are doing? If you have a problem, go and report to the government ... you know where ZANU PF offices are.[235]

Clearly, this boasting had political connotations. ZANU PF was aware of artisanal mining activities and the destruction it caused on the environment. But for purposes of electoral and political expediency, it could not antagonise the artisanal mining constituency though implementing or deploying environmental laws and policies.

The connection between artisanal mining and ZANU PF has been emphasised. Artisanal mining sites became more than sites of mining.[236] They also became political arenas. The artisanal mining

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[233] Interview with Hwezhaz (pseudonym), artisanal gold miner, 2 June 2022.
[234] Interview with Elijah, artisanal gold miner, 2 June 2022.
235 For similar cases in other countries, see "C. Amoako, "Survival now, sustainability later: the emerging artisanal mining and the dying agricultural livelihoods in the Akyem Abuakwa traditional area of Ghana." *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 2022, pp.1-22.
[236] See appendix 4.

pits, gulley's, streambanks, and deforested landscapes doubled as *de facto* ZANU PF "offices", where ZANU PF issues, particularly electoral strategies, were covered In all electoral seasons – 2002, 2005, 2008, and 2013 – artisanal mining held rallies, meetings, and mobilisation programmes for ZANU PF. As recent as the February 2022 ZANU PF bi-election campaigns, several ZANU PF meetings and rallies were conducted "*Kumakomba*" (at the pits), where ZANU PF big wigs in Kwekwe such as Energy Ncube and Kandros Mugabe mobilised for the party. Even meetings concerning purely artisanal mining issues started with chants of pro-ZANU PF slogans and song. Some of the slogans included "*Pamberi ne ZANU PF", "Upfumi kunevechidiki" and "Pamberi nechikorokoza".*

This translated to, respectively, "forward with ZANU PF", "wealth to the youths" and "forward with informal mining". The core of these meetings was reminding artisanal miners that as long as they continued to vote, or mobilise votes for ZANU PF, they would be allowed to continue with their activities. The refrain was always that votes for MDC meant that they were challenging ZANU PF and would be stopped from mining.[237] Such endorsement by ZANU PF entailed free and unrestricted mining activities, with no controls as regards environmental consequences.[238]

[237]See a video of ZANU PF politician warning the artisanal miners against voting for the opposition, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15EkNaYb9zc (Accessed 20 December 2021); Speech by E. D Ncube, Amaveni Hall, 4 March, 2021.

[238] See Appendix 5.

Appendix 4:

A poster circulated on various social media platforms showing the link between artisanal mining and ZANU PF politics. Note that this was on the eve of the 30 July 2018 general elections.

Appendix 5:

A road in Gwanda, Southern Zimbabwe, being undercut by artisanal mining activitieshttpswww.zimbabwesituation.comnewsgold-panners-dig-under-kwekwe-school#google_vignette (Accessed 20 June 2022)

In the context of such a relationship, whereby artisanal miners wanted to extract gold at all costs, and likewise, a party seeking to retain power at any expense, the role of environmental protection agencies was grossly undermined. Bodies like the Environment Management Agency which had over the years bemoaned this situation, cited artisanal mining as the most hazardous environmental issue in Kwekwe.[239]

[239]*The Chronicle*, 14 September, 2022, Also see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1AEC39xMrus (Accessed 3 September 2022), P. Moyo etal "Press and Environmental Management Agency (EMA)'s active role in reporting and

Powerless, the Environment Management Agency was forced to stand aside and watch as the landscape was scarred through diggings and loss of trees, and water bodies were poisoned by mercury and cyanide, or clogged by gold ore or increased siltation, among other adverse effects. Politics took precedence over all other considerations, and it was potentially risky for ZANU PF to antagonise such a crucial constituency in light of real electoral challenge by the MDC. Not only was the physical geography adversely affected. There were infrastructural costs that came with artisanal mining activities in Kwekwe. Several schools, clinics, sportsgrounds, beerhalls, portions of the city centre, roads, power and sewer lines, bridges, among other constructions, were severely damaged by informal mining activities.

Portions of Globe and Phoenix Primary School were rendered dangerous and "death" traps as the ground below was burrowed by artisanal miners encroaching from nearby shafts or establishing new workings.[240] Teachers and school children had to contend with dangling classrooms, noise from rock blasting, unusable sportsgrounds, a vandalised perimeter fence, and strangers roaming the school premises "threatening the school security guard and other employees at the school with death". [241] Without the assistance of responsible governmental authorities, the school's desperate attempts to fix the damage did not go far. All this happened in the full glare of government and party officials, EMA, the police, and the municipality. Edwick, a local resident familiar with the dynamics of the area conceded that while authorities were aware of this pattern established across the town, politics rendered professionally designed strategies to mitigate these situation un implementable.[242] A 2022 tour of Kwekwe revealed that Globe and Phoenix Primary School was not the only affected place. Riverlea Primary School (adjacent to Bell Mine), the portion of the railway line connecting the two major cities of Harare and Bulawayo, the portion of the road leading to Gokwe, Globe and Phoenix Hall, Amaveni Cemetery, Amaveni Wastewater Processing Plant, Sally Mugabe Primary School were, some of the places and infrastructure that were affected. In 2005, *The Herald* reported that the train plying the Harare to Gweru route was constantly disrupted by the damaging activities of the hundreds of illegal gold miners in Kwekwe

monitoring environmental degradation caused by small scale artisanal gold panning in Zimbabwe: A case of Shurugwi peri-urban." pp. 2224-3216.

[240] *The Midlands Observer*, 15 June, 2022, *The Chronicle*, 14 September, 2022.

[241] *The Newsday*, 31 May, 2022; *The Chronicles*, 30 August, 2022.

[242] E. Madzimure, "The effects of illegal gold mining by Globe and Phoenix mine retrenches on the environment" *Masters dissertation*, Midlands states university, 2015, p. 89. Also see Appendix 6.

and neighbouring towns.[243] At one time soldiers had to be deployed to guard the Boterekwa pass in Shurugwi (a mining town close to Kwekwe) following reports of massive gold panning activities which were threatening the safety passenger trains.[244] At one section of the road, artisanal miners dug a 15-meter-deep and 7-meter-wide cross-cutting tunnel beneath the road, causing the section to collapse.[245] Each time the road was rehabilitated the miners kept on coming back.[246] Amaveni resident Joseph Mkoniwa narrated how "at night many drunken people have fallen into mining ditches sprouting at odd spots".[247] No part of Kwekwe escaped the artisanal mining scourge. In addition to people accidentally falling into pits, cars were involved in accidents, buildings, houses, and bridges cracked, among other unsightly features.

[243] *The Herald*, 2005. *Sunday News Magazine*, 9 November, 2003. Also see, J. Ncube, Great Dyke Artisanal miners pose threat to railway lines, https://greatdykenews24.co.zw/great-dyke-artisanal-miners-pose-threat-to-railway-lines, 7 June 2019, (Accessed 04 February 2022)
[244] Ibid.
[245] *The Sunday News*, 22 August, 2022.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Interview with J. Mkoniwa, Amaveni resident, 6 June, 2022.

Appendix 6:

An artisanal mining shaft behind a block of classes at Globe and Phoenix School in Kwekwe *(The Chronicle*, 10 June 2022.)

In general, artisanal gold miners presented the greatest challenge for environmental authorities. It was difficult for environmental management bodies to discharge their statutory duties in light of artisanal mining destruction and the politics that afflicted the activity. As a matter of routine, before a mining license is issued, and before any mining commences, EMA had to conduct environmental impact assessments (EIA). If the mine was found to be environmentally compliant, a certificate was issued. Non-compliance meant the mine had to address the concerns raised and apply for a reassessment.[248] If the mine's operations posed risk to the workers, and human and animal life in the surrounding areas, the license was not granted. A license would be held back or revoked if the natural and physical environment was exposed. Rivers, trees, soils, and infrastructure were taken into consideration by EMA's decision-making teams. Assessing artisanal or informal mining contexts was a hard bargain. At worst it was impossible. As almost all artisanal mines or

[248] P. Gwimbi, and G. Nhamo. "Effectiveness of Environmental Impact Assessment follow-up as a tool for environmental management: Lessons and insights from platinum mines along the Great Dyke of Zimbabwe." *Environmental Earth Sciences,* Vol. 75, No. 7, 2016, pp.1-17.

operational areas could not meet the basic minimum standards of safety and environmental protection, there is no way a professional assessment would allow mining to be undertaken.

However, despite concerns by EMA, municipalities, and the police, among other bodies tasked with ensuring environmental compliance and punishing offenders, these agencies were limited in how far they could go in terms of reining-in destructive artisanal mining activities. Conversations with police officers, EMA and municipal officials revealed the presence of politics in defining their bend-backwards posture. Despite land conservation being a continuous theme in discussions by the Ministry of Environment, including Ministers and Deputy Ministers, nothing substantial came out of attempts to halt artisanal mining land degradation. Minister Nhema visited Kwekwe in 2005, and his Deputy, Andrew Langa, in 2007, on environmental roadshows. They both promised to fix the scourge.[249] As politics was at the centre of artisanal mining, and by extension, environmental degradation, all they promised appeared to be rhetoric and nothing more. Nothing substantial and tangible changed as regards artisanal miners' relationship with their natural and man-made surroundings. Looking at the situation at Globe and Phoenix Mine, Tabex Mine, Riverlea Mine, Unit Mine, among others, they continued to be centres of river pollution, river siltation, gulley creation, and infrastructure destruction. Yet, artisanal mining, the kingpin of many of ZANU PF's electoral battles, could not be easily pushed back by environmental laws. As nothing effective was done by the state to halt their destructive operations, artisanal miners continued with little hindrance.

During the research for this dissertation (2022), artisanal gold mining was in full swing in the "decommissioned" Globe and Phoenix Mine, Gaika Mine, Unit mine, and Tiger Reef Mine, among numerous others. Unregulated, it continued to menacingly scour the environment. This continued with the active support of the party, or the unconcerned eye of the state. Attempts by the police, EMA, and municipalities to prosecute environmental perpetrators were often frustrated by political actors and did not go far. Politicians and artisanal miners violating environmental laws often invoked party politics to escape fines, imprisonment, and eviction from illegal mining sites, among other punitive measures. In cases whereby some form of punishment was meted out, it was not of much effect, neither was it disruptive to the debilitating artisanal mining processes. Fines were a

[249] *The Standard*, 9 January, 2009; *The Herald*, 15 March, 2007.

slap on the wrist, cases that went to the court were not finalised, and miners and their political backers simply ignored orders to cease operations. In 2019 ZANU PF MP Vongai Mupereri was found guilty by the courts for encouraging artisanal miners to dig for gold on an industrial site. He simply ignored the court order to cease operations. Rather than the issue causing outrage within his party and government, Mupereri continued to hold his influential positions.[250] An EMA official lamented in this regard:

> We are responsible for environmental issues. We put a lot of effort to protect the environment and to try to reverse the situation in cases where damage has been done. But in Kwekwe due to politics we cannot fully carry out our mandate. ZANU PF and government officials do not support us, they actually undo all our work particularly as regards artisanal mining activities and especially during election seasons.[251]

As was the case with *mandimbandimba*, ZANU PF politicians would cause EMA officials, municipal police, or national police to release or drop charges against perpetrators of environmental violence. For cases that were prosecuted, the offenders often walked away with a measly fine as party and state interfered with judicial affairs involving electorally crucial constituencies such as artisanal miners. Important in this scenario is that these environmental institutions and the police were usually not allowed to shut down operations at places where environmental transgressions were taking place. A senior politician would just instruct that they leave the place and assure them that compliance processes were being followed and would be fully implemented in a short space of time, yet this was mostly never carried out.[252]

Kwekwe's peri-urban, semi-rural and farming lands constituted another environmentally contentious region. Miners, with little regard for the wellbeing of the natural or man-made environment, were regularly in conflict with villagers and farmers, both established and the newly resettled. Non-mining communities were often at the receiving end. They often accused miners of, among other transgressions, invading their lands with gold-detector machines and digging without

[250] Interview conducted by the *crises group*, 11 March 2021, *New Zimbabwe*, 16 March 2019, https://www.thezimbabwenewslive.com/zimbabwe-cabinet-ministers-award-themselves-gold-mining-licenses/(Accessed 6 November 2021).
[251] Interview with Anonymous EMA official, 25 July, 2022.
[252] Ibid.

the permission of the owner. Sekai Muronda woke up one day in 2017 to find close to 30 people and two trucks at a portion of her farm. They were digging for gold ore and were loading it into the trucks.[253] Efforts by his family to ward off the miners did not yield results as the miners threatened violence. Within three days, a major portion of her field had turned into "unfarmable" gullies as many other miners continued to troop in having heard rumours of a gold find. The situation was the same across the Grasslands area, largely dominated by newly resettled farmers. A gold find on their premises was plot owners' worst nightmare, particularly in an era and situation whereby policing mechanisms had been weakened by political dynamics.[254] Observations in peri-urban farming areas and villages, and conversations with farmers and villagers, revealed how, within a short space of time, a gold discovery would almost completely change a terrain. In 2020 in the Grasslands Resettlement Area, hundreds of artisanal miners descended on Chaka Farm/Homestead within a space of 48 hours when a gold find was made. Within the same duration, hundreds of trees had been indiscriminately cut down, hundreds of holes had been dug, a stream that runs through the farm had been clogged as it became a gold washing and processing area, and gullies had been established, creating traps for both farm animals and humans. Toxic gold processing chemicals were used indiscriminately and carelessly. Villagers and farmers not only lost portions of their farming land, they also lost livestock to toxic chemicals, contaminated water points and bone breaking shaft falls.[255]

[253] Interview with Sekai Maronda, 16 July, 2022.
[254] Interview with Mr. Manzini, 16 July, 2022.
[255] See Appendix 7.

Appendix 7:

An abandoned pit at Chakawa Farm, Grasslands. Wildlife and livestock have over the years been trapped in such pits (*Picture taken by author*)

Houses cracked or collapsed, perimeter fencing was vandalised or stolen, and boreholes were stripped for makeshift mining tools.[256] When the gold veins cut, a trail of destruction was left in the wake of environmentally brutal mining activities. The usual political language was invoked by artisanal miners in order to justify their destructive activities. In addition to working while wearing regalia reflecting support for ZANU PF, they also dismissed aggrieved people by retorting that "this gold is on ZANU PF land", "this land was given for free so everyone should enjoy its fruits", "this is part of black empowerment", "whites ate, it's now our turn to eat", and "this is what independence means".[257]

[256] Interview with Mrs. Sithole, farmer, 17 July, 2022.
[257] Ibid.

Purging the forests

In terms of the natural environment, deforestation was one of the obvious consequences of uncontrolled mining activities in Kwekwe. Timber, derived from trees, is important to both formal and informal trench mining. It is used for timbering, also called trenching or planking, that is for supporting trenches when a shaft becomes too deep, or when the soil is loose, or the trench walls are unstable.[258] Informal mining, unsustainable and with a precarious future, were the preferred cheap substitutes for the required timbering material. Artisanal mining cut down common trees for this purpose. Tinashe Sengai explained in the context of Unit Mine:

> We use tree trunks and stronger branches to support underground pillars. Buying the required and tested support structures would make the mining expensive. Trunks and branches have so far served the purpose very well against the fragile and very old shafts.[259]

Almost all the mines, particularly in the Grasslands area, lost thousands of trees in the last two decades. What made the situation worse for the environment is that the supporting stumps had to be replaced at short intervals, particularly after drying. As such, there was a constant cutting down of trees without a systematic approach, without replacing them and clearly without regard to broader environmental consequences.

The situation as regards trees was exacerbated by the fact that artisanal miners are highly mobile people.[260] Usually originating from different parts of the country, they would often build temporary housing structures largely composed of timber. This was a well-established pattern in villages and peri-urban areas. Unit Mine, Collision Mine and BD Mine offer illustrative examples. Housing structures were predominantly built with pole and roofed with grass. They were covered with either mud, corrugated iron sheets, plastic, or cardboard material.[261] With the trees easily accessible, the other material could be new, as it was generally cheap; or could have been discarded as rubbish by original owners.[262] These were almost always self-built houses, with the help of unpaid friends or

[258] https://www.911metallurgist.com/timber-support-underground-mining/(Accessed 1 August 2022).
[259] T. Sengai, artisanal gold miner, Unit mine, 6 June, 2022.
[260] N. Chipangura, "We are one big happy family": The social organisation of artisanal and small scale gold mining in Eastern Zimbabwe." pp. 1265-1273.
[261] Field work observation. Also see Appendix 8.
[262] Ibid.

relatives. [263] For married couples, or people with artisanal mining families or friends, the dynamic worsened the situation for the environment. In places where a vein of gold would continue to yield for longer periods, that is, months to a couple of years, the environment would suffer more under artisanal mining contexts. If, for example, the husband came to an artisanal mining area first, they would set the structural base. The wife would then follow, sometimes with the children. The wives and their husbands would then invite their respective artisanal mining family members. Then, the domino effect continues, signaling an exponential population increases in particular areas. As the area continued to yield gold, many people, and families did not return to their original regions, and ended up establishing more semi-permanent settlements, of which some in Kwekwe, established in this manner, are now years old. BD Mine saw hundreds, while Unit Mine and Collision, had dozens of such dwellings, with each housing five to ten people. Others had considerably more. This had observable adverse implications on the natural environment. The pattern observed in Kwekwe, and its surroundings is congruent with economist Dreschler and Environmental historian Phiri's respective observations in different areas. When the miners discover a lucrative area, they resort to clearing the vegetation cover first to pave way for mineral extraction.[264] They then go further to clear the area for settlement. Once the base was set up, the vegetation would then be steadily stripped of trees, mainly for timbering and firewood.[265]

[263] T. Nkomo, A Social and economic history of artisanal mining compound at Unit Mine in Kwekwe, 2000-2018, Unpublished *Honours diss*, The University of Zimbabwe, 2019.
[264] B. Dreschler, "Small-scale mining and sustainable development within the SADC region." *Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 84, No. 84, 2001, p. 147.
[265] S. Phiri, "Impact *of artisanal small scale gold mining in Umzingwane District (Zimbabwe), a potential for ecological disaster", Master's diss*, University of the Free State, 2011.

Appendix 8:

Pole and dagga houses at Unit Mine. This is the common structure at many artisanal mining compounds in Kwekwe (*Picture taken by* a*uthor*).

The demand for firewood, by extension, trees, was high because most artisanal mines and surrounding areas did not have electricity. Even those that were on the grid, it was rarely extended to the compounds. This meant household cooking, heating and warming were carried out on open fires. For the three compounds mentioned in this section, this translated to dozens of trees logged per week, contributing to six million trees that Zimbabwe lose every year.[266] Ronald Fireyi nonchalantly explained the situation at Chaka Mine: "We have no trouble preparing our food. We simply go into the forest, in the nearby resettlement farms that are just across the road and collect firewood".[267] So blatant were the activities that destroyed the environment that one would be forgiven to ask if Zimbabwe had any legislation designed to protect the natural environment. Since the colonial era, through to the post-independence and the 2000s, Zimbabwe consistently had some

[266]See H. Metro, 20 November, 2020. https://globalpressjournal.com/africa/zimbabwe/unregulated-deforestation-may-decimating-zimbabwes-timber-industry/(Accessed 4 September 2022).
[267] Interview with Ronald Fireyi, artisanal miner, 3 June, 2022, also see appendix 9 and appendix 10

of the most comprehensive environmental legislation that matched international standards.[268] Almost all aspects of the Zimbabwean socio-economic landscape were watched closely by environmental watchdogs. There are nearly 20 Acts and nearly 40 statutory laws that dealt with environmental issues across Zimbabwe's contemporary history. These include the Natural Resources Act (1941), Forest Act (1949), Hazardous Substances and Articles Act (1977), Atmospheric Pollution Prevention Act (1971), Water Act (1976), Communal Lands Act (1982), Mines and Minerals Act (1961), Environmental Management Act (2002), Urban Councils Act (1995), Rural District Councils Act (1988) and the Traditional Leaders Act (1998), among others.[269] However, such an array of legislation, most of which, in one way or the other, touched on mining, could not resist the 2000s politicisation of the Zimbabwean society. Political and electoral considerations took precedence, relegating the law to second fiddle.

Appendix 9:

A farm adjacent to Unit Mine suffered as artisanal miners cut down trees for domestic/household use (*Picture taken by Author*).

[268] See, for example T. Madimu, "Farmers, miners and the state in colonial Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), c. 1895-1961." PhD diss., Stellenbosch University, 2017. G. Nhamo Unit, "Institutional and legal provisions for environmental management in Zimbabwe." *African Journal of Environmental Assessment and Management*, Vol. 7, 2003, pp. 14-20, N. D. Mutizwa-Mangiza, "Decentralization and district development planning in Zimbabwe." *Public administration and development*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 1990, pp. 423-435.
[269]https://unfccc.int/resource/ccsites/zimbab/legislat/legislat.htm (Accessed 6 May 2022).

Appendix 10:

After clearing and working places like this, artisanal miners simply abandoned them without any attempt to rehabilitate them (*author*).

Decimating wildlife

Wildlife was one of the biggest victims of informal gold mining in Kwekwe. Human-wildlife conflict was witnessed particularly in the peri-urban and agricultural areas surrounding Kwekwe. Artisanal miners at Unit, Tiger Reef, Collision and Bell mines were notorious for illegal hunting, eating and selling game like hares, warthogs, deers, kudus, impalas and bushbucks.[270] In addition to game, artisanal miners at the mentioned mines also hit or trapped wild birds and fished to complement their diets or their incomes. Fish were sometimes blasted using rock-blasting

[270] While literature on artisanal mining has not yet made a connection with hunting in Zimbabwe, there is evidence that shows link between artisanal mining and hunting in other African countries C. Spira, et al "The socio-economics of artisanal mining and bush meat hunting around protected areas: Kahuzi–Biega national park and Itombwe nature reserve, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo." *Oryx* Vol. 53, No. 1, 2019, pp. 136-144.

dynamites and animals and birds unsustainably poisoned using the toxic cyanide. Confided Sengai at Unit Mine:

> We do not usually buy meat, we trap birds and animals using cyanide. We put it at their watering holes and they die immediately after consuming the tainted water. We throw away the intestines, that is where the chemicals will be, then we cook and eat the rest of the meat.[271]

While some of the meat was for consumption, some of it was sold to fellow artisanal miners or villagers.[272] These transactions were crucial particularly in times whereby gold would be difficult to come by. A gold rich vein was not a permanent feature of these mines. It would alternatively disappear (for days or months) and reappear usually for a few days. So, during such off days, in terms of money, life would be difficult for most artisanal miners. The situation would be worse during the rainy season, when shaft mining would be dangerous.[273] Wildlife had no respite because there was no coordination in terms of hunting, and it was carried out throughout the day and night, by different uncoordinated and unrelated groups and individuals.

Prior to the year 2000, before the FTLRP and the rise of mass-scale artisanal mining, most of the peri-urban areas were white-owned estates, forested and teeming with game. These were benefiting from a more formalised socio-economic landscape dominated by controlled hunting and marketing of natural resources and wildlife.[274] In Grasslands and Tiger Reef areas, said Lameck, "It is now difficult to find wildlife. They have been hunted to depletion because almost everyone here became a hunter as the animals were many".[275] Animals such as kudus, warthogs, impalas, among others, were believed to be "extinct" in these areas at the time of research. Respondents concurred that it had been years since they saw certain animals that freely roamed the areas in the early 2000s.

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[271] Interview with Sengai, artisanal gold miner, 6 July, 2022.
[272] Ibid.
[273] Interview with artisanal gold miner, 10 July, 2022.
[274] R. S. Maphosa etal, "Liberation theology and the depletion of natural resources, a smart partnership?': An appraisal on varimi vatsva in the former commercial white farms in Zimbabwe" *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2011, p. 159.
[275] Interview with Lameck, Grasslands resident, 17 July, 2022.

The depletion of wildlife in such areas and across Zimbabwe had a political dimension. It was the product of the informalisation of the economy and opening up of formerly secured, commercialised and largely white-owned areas.[276] Sam Moyo perceived this new situation as previously disadvantaged blacks expressing their "independence" and "freedom" which was promised by the 1960s/1970s liberation struggle against the monopolisation of the economy and natural resources by the white minority.[277] The common refrain among the artisanal mining respondents was that "our fathers died for this country", "this is the land of our forefathers", "this is the freedom we were promised", among other statements reflecting the meaning of independence and how the benefits included enjoying the "God-given resources" which whites did not want to share. This political sentiment was not limited to artisanal miners. [278] Senior ZANU PF politicians did not seem too keen to halt this destructive activity. They actually reinforced this sentiment by reminding artisanal miners that the produce of the natural environment was a reward for voting ZANU PF. These benefits, it was emphasised, would be stopped by an MDC government and that only ZANU PF had "black people at heart".[279] In such a situation, the police, Wildlife Management Authority officials, EMA officials, among other institutions, were disempowered and helpless to act.

River and stream silting and poisoning

Rivers that crisscrossed Kwekwe District were some of the main targets of uncontrolled, indiscriminate, informalised and unregulated mining activities. Rivers such as Sebakwe, Kwekwe, Ngondomba, and Giraffe not only had portions clogged by gold ore and silt but were also poisoned by mercury and cyanide. The reckless extraction and gold purification processes led to effluent disposals in the water sources such as rivers and dams. Mine effluent disposal is characterised by high levels of toxic chemicals that are used during the processing of gold. These include cyanide

[276]J. Mapira, "Zimbabwe's parks and wildlife management authority: Challenges for sustainable development." *European Journal of social science studies,* Vol. 2, No. 9, 2017, p. 247.

[277] S. Moyo, "Three decades of agrarian reform in Zimbabwe." *Journal of peasant studies* Vol. 38, No. 3, 2011, 493-531.

[278] Ibid.

[279] See Zimbabwe's former president Robert Mugabe saying many white farm owners occupied the land illegally and "historically have a debt." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0MSmwdKPr0 (Accessed 1 August 2022), H. S. William, "Debating the expropriation of White farms in Zimbabwe" *The Journal of Modern African Studies* , Vol. 41, No. 1, 2003, pp. 75-89.

and mercury.[280] At Unit Mine effluent also came from waste rock, tailing depositories and slime dams. These drained into adjacent streams and wetlands, some closer to the mine and others further down. [281] At Globe and Phoenix Mine alluvial artisanal gold miners washed their ore in a stream that crossed the town of Kwekwe. At Bell Mine it was washed in Kwekwe River.

Gold panning was being carried out everywhere were there was a water body or channel. Mercury was combined with crushed ore and water in small dishes, which were then shaken so that mercury and gold would settle at the bottom and amalgamate. This was a hand process involving super refined ore mixed with mercury. The gold ore and mercury mix were wrapped in cloth, which was then manually twisted and pressed to separate the amalgam from the liquid mercury. A substantial portion of the mercury used at any given time was lost to the ground and the river, contaminating the environment.

There is another environmentally damaging process that was done in the processing of gold ore. The James' Table system was carried out at the riverbanks or other water bodies. It was observed more closely at Kwekwe River and Giraffe River of Riverlea Mine and Unit Mine, respectively. Miners moved loose surface soil, which they occasionally scraped from a location where they assumed there were gold samples, to the water sources, through wheelbarrows or vehicles. The James' Table would be set up next to, sometimes in, the water body with a piece of cloth laid on it. Soil will be placed on the cloth and water poured on the soil.[282] The soil will be washed into the river and gold will remain stuck on the piece of cloth. Yet, these were the same sources of water for human and animal consumption, and for agricultural activities. Non-artisanal mining villagers felt the pinch of the actions by perpetrators of environmental violence.

Sekai lamented: "We use water from this river [Kwekwe River] for domestic purposes such as washing dishes and clothes, cooking as well as bathing, but they do not care about that, they continue poisoning the water by panning inside the rivers".[283] Another farm worker at Chikumbirike farm near Kwekwe River said "We used to catch some fish here, but right now there

[280] R. A. Adler, et al. "Water, mining, and waste: an historical and economic perspective on conflict management in South Africa." *The Economics of Peace and Security Journal,* Vol. 2, No. 2, 2007.
[281] J. M. Amezaga., and P. L. Younger. "Ermite: Supporting European policy making on mine waste and waters." *Proceedings of Mine Water 2004*, pp. 41-46.
[282] See an example of a James Table in appendix 12.
[283] Interview with Sekai Maronda, 16 July, 2022.

are no fish anymore, they all disappeared because of these mining activities".[284] According to the Minamata convention in 2011, artisanal miners released 1400 tonnes of mercury into the environment.[285] According to environmental historians Maponga and Ngorima about 50% of the mercury (three tonnes) on worked on amalgam plates in Zimbabwe was lost in the rivers and on the ground surface, thus posing a direct threat to the environment.[286] Historian Peskin noted the disproportionate impact on the poor of harmful environmental activity. Those most vulnerable, and therefore stood to gain the most from environmental protection, were usually the less wealthy, the elderly, the sick, the disabled, as well as children.[287] In Kwekwe, the discharge of such enormous quantities of mud, dirt and chemicals in rivers had devastating consequences on surfaces in some cases meant people had to travel long distances, usually on foot, for water to drink. Livestock also could not drink from any pond or graze on any veldts. It means herders had to go to lands further away from mining activities to reduce the risk of livestock poisoning. Climatic conditions such as the carrying of dust by wind and sometimes by water, resulted in the siltation of rivers, however, some rivers, such as Giraffe, suffered from both intense siltation and soil dumping by the artisanal gold miners such that they dried up. [288]

[284] Interview with Farm worker, 20 June, 2022.
[285] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdmWEQy3MgY (Accessed 1 August 2022)
[286] O. Maponga and C. F. Ngorima. "Overcoming environmental problems in the gold panning sector through legislation and education: The Zimbabwean experience." *Journal of Cleaner Production,* Vol. 11, No. 2, 2003, 147-157; Cyanide, rapidly acting and deadly chemical that can exist in various forms. Also see appendix 11.
[287] A. Sinden, "In defense of absolutes: Combating the politics of power in environmental law." *Iowa L. Rev.* 90, 2004, p.1453.
[288] See Appendix 12.

Appendix 11:

Photo credit Obey Sibanda – river panning in the Tuli now Thuli river west of Gwanda

https://zimfieldguide.com/midlands/zimbabwe%E2%80%99s-artisanal-miners-popularly-known-makorokoza-risk-their-lives-make-decent-living (Accessed 30 August 2022).

Appendix 12:

The James' Table panning system on a wetland area (*New Ziana 8 April 2022*).

Appendix 13:

Dried and silted Giraffe River, for many years artisanal miners washed their gold ore at its various stretches (Picture taken by *Author*).

Not many had the courage to confront the artisanal miners because of their reputation for extreme violence and political backing.[289] Ample technical knowhow, and the will of environmental protection agencies to secure the environment against damaging activities, was negated by ZANU PF's quest to retain power at all costs.

Shafts and tunnels as death traps

Throughout the 2000s shaft collapses were a common feature of Zimbabwe's artisanal mining landscape. Rarely did the media go for more than a month without reporting of shaft or tunnel collapse, rock fall or major underground rock movement. Unmanaged, unsupervised, and uninspected, the mines were literally death traps and perpetually a source of disaster. Zimbabwe

[289] Interview with anonymous, artisanal gold miner, 18 June, 2022.

recorded over 436 fatalities between 2018 and 2020, with 112 recorded in 2018, 182 in 2019, and 169 in 2020.[290] The media and the general public attributed almost all of these tragedies to miners' disregard for mining regulations and their rudimentary knowledge of mining procedures. While on paper Zimbabwe boasted of watertight mining, occupational safety and environmental protection regulations, their observance in non-formal mining situations swung between minimal and non-existent. The overwhelming majority of artisanal miners did not have experience of mining processes. It was a field of ordinary men and women who encountered mining for the first time. As such, accidents were bound to happen. For example, while previous owners of mines that were subsequently taken over by artisanal miner operations left pillars to support the shaft and tunnel structure, artisanal miners followed to extract gold from those pillars. This led to many of the pillars falling or being weakened, consequently weakening the mine. This is how a number of shafts and tunnels collapsed.[291]

As usual, the response by many artisanal miners was that the risk outweighed the daily social and economic struggles they endured. Explained Elijah:

> I have too many responsibilities – school fees, rentals, extended family, health, food – the demands of life are just too many. If I stay home I will die of hunger, if I go underground I will die of mine collapse. So which one do you think is better? I know people have died in this shaft [Unit Mine] but it is better to die trying.[292]

Since the start of mass-scale and free-for-all artisanal mining in the early 2000s almost every underground mine in Kwekwe and its environs had a case of artisanal miners injured or killed usually due to rock fall, shaft or tunnel collapse.

In addition to dangers such as mine collapses, another source of accidents involved rock-blasting explosives. In a formal mining context rock blasting is carried out with strict adherence to safety

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[290] https://miningzimbabwe.com/mining-fatalities-a-cause-for-concern/ (Accessed 10 February 2022)
[291] M. Chikwetu, and I. Chirisa. "Problems and prospects of CBD horizontal and vertical expansion in mining areas: The case of Kwekwe, Zimbabwe." *Geografia* Vol. 10, No. 1, 2014.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5nAaqeubmY, (Accessed 1 September 2022) https://www.business humanrights.org/en/latest-news/ (Accessed 1 September 2022) zimbabwe-survivor-of-collapsed-mine-says-more-bodies-trapped-despite-rescue-operations-being-called-off/ (Accessed 30 March 2022).
[292] Interview with Elijah, artisanal gold miner, 2 June, 2022.

procedures. In artisanal and informal contexts, whereby safety issues were not a central issue, blasting accidents were prevalent. Cases of deaths and injuries abound. Shaft walls, tunnels and pillars were weakened, and effective and recommended remedies were not used. This created death traps. The most notorious mines for that record in Kwekwe were Globe and Phoenix, Unit Mine and Zesa. They were already weak because of years of neglect or piecemeal attention. Blasting worsened their instability. Yet, as respondents explained, they were some of the better rewarding in terms of gold yield.[293] Related to rock blasting were complications such as inhalation of toxic rock or dynamite substances which had immediate, medium, and long-term effects. These included headaches, high blood pressure, tuberculosis, and eyesight and hearing problems.[294] Beyond effects on personal health, non-artisanal mining Kwekwe dwellers complained that the uncontrolled blasting that did not follow even minimum safety and environmental guidelines affected air quality, caused noise pollution, and affected buildings in surrounding areas largely by causing cracks.[295] Despite all these cases involving death, injuries, health complications, and destructive effects on natural environments and infrastructure, the government never came up with a resolution to fully implement the array of laws drawn over the years. If and when they were deployed it was usually piecemeal and political, and never for the concern of the environment. [296]

Conclusion

In Kwekwe, environmental degradation caused by artisanal mining was a major source of concern to many citizens. Aside from traditional mining sites, artisanal miners scavenged for gold in environmentally risky areas such as farmland. Their activities would damage infrastructure such as schools, roads, houses and railway lines, among others. Moreover, artisanal miners substantially affected wildlife in many ways. The hunting, particularly during the periods of poor gold yields, was not only illegal but also excessive. Other animals were killed by consumption of toxic mining chemicals dumped throughout the forests and at water points. For humans, they also suffered the consequences of environmental damage caused by artisanal miners. Water supplies were poisoned, grazing areas were reduced in size and number, making trips for water and grazing land

[293] Interviews with several artisanal miners in Kwekwe, 4 June, 2022.
[294] S. Abbasi, "Defining safety hazards and risks in mining industry: a case-study in United States." *Asian Journal of Applied Science and Technology (AJAST)*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2018, p. 1076.
[295] Ibid.
[296] https://www.thezimbabwemail.com/parliament-parliament/mine-accidents-mps-grill-inactive-chitando/(Accessed 15 February 2022).

longer. Cases of people, livestock, and wildlife falling and dying in gullies, some abandoned and uncovered, were not uncommon.[297] The number of shaft and tunnel accidents revealed the extent of the crisis. Lands were left bare of vegetation and river siltation was accelerated largely by the poor methods of washing gold ore. Despite elaborate and impeccable environmental laws and policies, the activism of the media and NGOs, and scholarly analyses regarding the dire environmental situation of Kwekwe (and Zimbabwe), the state barely gave attention to this intense assault on the environment by artisanal miners. The political ecology of artisanal mining situations is an important factor to consider. Artisanal mining existed in the domain of party politics. Almost all ZANU PF officials in Kwekwe were involved in artisanal mining, and most artisanal miners supported ZANU PF. It was a very political and a give-and-take affair. Issues of power and how it was exercised, and the context of a hegemonic struggle with MDC, shaped the environmental politics that played out. In Kwekwe's gold mining landscapes issues of environmental violence became more political than mere technical and scientific questions. In a way, politics ruled the environment.

[297] See Appendix 14

Appendix14:

This shaft at Chaka Mine in Kwekwe represents thousands of deathtraps across Zimbabwe's artisanal mining landscape (Picture taken by *author*).

Chapter Five

Conclusions

This study has examined the violence that characterised everyday life and political contestations in the artisanal and small-scale gold mining dominated town of Kwekwe in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe. It started by tracing the socio-economic history of Zimbabwe from the 1980s up to the 2000s. At independence, the Robert Mugabe-led ZANU PF government took over from the settler-colonial Rhodesian Front regime, amidst high expectations for social, political, and economic reforms from the black majority. In spite of the initial signs of progress whereby the new government invested massively in social services such as education and health, the euphoria soon suffered fatigue. By the end of the 1980s transitioning into the 1990s there emerged voices of discontent against growing authoritarianism, a sluggish economy, and a deteriorating social welfare system, among other concerns.

Throughout the 1990s and the period leading up to the 2000s, social movements, white farmers, students, trade unions and landless black Zimbabweans began to question the independence project. A direct manifestation of these dissenting voices against ZANU PF's rule was the emergence of many new political parties such as the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) led by Edgar Tekere in 1990, Zimbabwe Union of Democrats led by Margaret Dongo in 1995, and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) led by Morgan Tsvangirai in 1999. Trade unions and civil society organisations such as the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), the Zimbabwe National Students' Union (ZINASU) and National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) became increasingly militant. However, it is the emergence of the MDC as a formidable opposition party in 1999 that rattled ZANU PF and radically transformed the nature and substance of politics in Zimbabwe.

There were many key social, economic, and political initiatives that symbolised a country sliding into crisis. The most significant was the adoption of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund's Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1991. To many Zimbabweans, instead of alleviating their plight, the ESAPs worsened their predicament. Historian Alois Mlambo lamented the fact that under the programme, Zimbabwe's inflation spiked,

unemployment worsened, state interventions in social infrastructures and services declined, leaving many Zimbabweans socially and economically exposed. In the industrial and mining town of Kwekwe, the site that this study seeks to investigate, the effects of a struggling economy were clear. Large state-owned enterprises such as the Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Making Company (ZISCO), National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ), Zimbabwe United Passengers Company (ZUPCO), and others, retrenched thousands of workers in Zimbabwe as a whole, yet the impact was grave in places like Kwekwe where people had until then relied on formal employment for their livelihoods. The effects of the retrenchments were felt in other downstream industries and the wider economy, as the Zimbabwean currency weakened, inflation increased and access to foreign currency became difficult. For economic sectors that are heavily dependent on access to foreign currency and markets such as mining, the economic decline increased the cost of operations. In Kwekwe, therefore, many gold mines downgraded their operational capacities or completely shut down. Tiger Reef mine, Globe and Phoenix mine, Gaika Mine, Unit Mine, Collision mine, Empress Mine, and dozens of others were affected. In an environment of joblessness, retrenchments, a shrinking economy, in addition to the thousands of schools, colleges and universities graduates joining the job market every year, it is unsurprising that there was a phenomenal growth of informal mining and other economic activities.

While ASGM was a trickle in the 1990s, there was a sudden mass surge of numbers entering these mining activities from the year 2000. This rush, which instantly assumed a free for all character, was mainly prompted by the Third Chimurenga – a nationalist and ideological trope conveniently adopted by the ZANU PF government in the face of stiff opposition challenge in 2000. The Third Chimurenga was supposedly a process to complete the struggle for independence from settler-colonial domination, and it was underpinned by the idea that black Zimbabweans had to reclaim their social and economic resources that had for long been in the hands of 'foreigners' and the white minority. Amongst the major targets for redressing the colonial wrongs were the redistribution of agricultural lands and mineral resources. Termed 'invasions' by critics and 'restitution' by supporters, the Third Chimurenga for the major part was jambanja, a ChiShona term that means 'politics of chaos'[298]

[298] Chaumba, et al., "From jambanja to planning".

While the Third Chimurenga created thousands of new farmers and landowners, it also triggered the unexpected emergence of new classes of mine owners, miners, and related dealers who operated individually, as small groups or small-scale operators. They 'invaded' former large-scale mines, rejuvenated old ones, and (re)discovered new mining claims. These dynamics can be placed in what agrarian studies scholar Sam Moyo, saw as the "liberation" of natural resources which were formerly monopolised by a privileged white minority. The thesis argues that ASGM presented new dimensions to the violent politics that predominated in Zimbabwe since the turn of the millennium.

Chapter two examined the prominent role that artisanal miners played in partisan political contestations. The chapter discussed how in artisanal mining contexts violence that is related to political contestations and processes was neither experienced as a one-off, fixed event, nor was it perceived in one specific way, rather it was interpreted by various actors differently depending on the context. Moreover, the violence associated with artisanal miners could not be divorced from society's everyday experience of life, also given the widespread experiences of such mining activities in the country. In that sense violence, as anthropologist Veena Das would argue "descends" into the "ordinary" everyday social and political life, such that acts and other behavioral repertoires can be experienced as people pursue ordinary ambitions, interests, build or recreate particular social orders. Unlike state perpetrated violence using the army and police, the political violence that involves artisanal miners was very obvious. The ruling ZANU PF party capitalised on this social influence and incorporated artisanal miners into its politics by many ways; coercion, negotiation and rewards. Negotiations and rewards often came in the form of access to many kinds of resources such as the mines and gold markets, but also increase their social and political visibility. The chapter also tried to show that the discourses and practices of violence were not just strategic and planned on the part of the state and ruling party, but could be seen in the experiences of ordinary life as people pursue their everyday businesses. Violence, hence, was seen in the way people joke, in rumors, songs in discussion about the mythical, about morality, in dress, in street lingo, in virtually all facets of everyday in a mining setting.

Chapter three focused on a class of miners known in Shona as "Mbimbo" The violence, as exemplified by the activities of the mbimbos, took on various manifestations, including physical, symbolic, emotional, and verbal. This has been the case in terms of threats and actual perpetrations.

People were injured, killed, or feared for their lives. Due to the brutality of artisanal miners, numerous people lost property. In spite of the fact that the majority of these actions were common criminal acts of artisanal miners struggling financially, striving to establish status, battling over territory, or engaging in "disciplining" violence against their spouses, they were entrenched in political circumstances. During election seasons, the political perspective was apparent. Given that hundreds of thousands of people were directly involved in artisanal mining, ZANU PF realised that it would be electorally advantageous to include them into the party. On the other hand, artisanal miners realised that they had to actively support ZANU PF, or "perform ZANU PF" as described by Grasia Mkodzongi, in order to continue their mining operations, which were illegal under government mining and environmental policies and laws. In this give-and-take, transactional relationship, artisanal miners, the mbimbos, were permitted to participate in indiscriminate social vices without fear of prosecution or incarceration. They became the "children of the party". Their propensity for violence was useful during election seasons. They would assault, murder, or expel opposition supporters from specific communities. No one who was not a member of ZANU PF would be permitted to mine for gold, and anyone suspected of voting for opposition politics would be subjected to violence. Therefore, attempts to penalise them would backfire on the party. Unfortunately, domestic spheres were also affected by the violence. Men in the artisanal mining industry subjected their wives, girlfriends, and other female members of the society to gender-based abuse. The mbimbos were not restricted by institutional mechanisms since their membership and service to ZANU PF shielded them. As established in this chapter, there is a close connection between artisanal miners, artisanal mining, violence, and party politics.

Chapter four has demonstrated the centrality of violence is to Kwekwe artisanal mining environments. Environmental degradation caused by artisanal mining was a major source of concern. Aside from traditional mining sites, artisanal miners scavenged for gold in environmentally risky areas such as farmland. Their activities would damage infrastructure such as schools, roads, houses and railway lines, among others. Moreover, artisanal miners substantially affected wildlife in many ways. The illegal and disproportionate hunting, combined with the indiscriminate dumping of toxic mine chemicals throughout the forests and at water points, brewed a deadly situation for wildlife. For humans, they also suffered the consequences of environmental damage caused by artisanal miners. Water supplies were poisoned, grazing areas were reduced in size and number, making trips for water and grazing land longer. Cases of people, livestock, and

wildlife falling and dying in gullies, some abandoned and uncovered, were not uncommon. The number of shaft and tunnel accidents revealed the extent of the crisis. Lands were left bare of vegetation and river siltation was accelerated largely by the poor methods of washing gold ore. Despite elaborate and impeccable environmental laws and policies, the activism of the media and NGOs, and scholarly analysis regarding the dire environmental situation of Kwekwe (and Zimbabwe), the state barely gave attention to this intense assault on the environment by artisanal miners. The political ecology of artisanal mining situations is an important factor to consider. Artisanal mining existed in the domain of party politics. As almost all ZANU PF officials in Kwekwe were involved in artisanal mining, and as most artisanal miners supported ZANU PF in a give-and-take affair, artisanal mining was political. Issues of power and how it was exercised, and the context of a hegemonic struggle with MDC, shaped the environmental politics that played out. In Kwekwe's gold mining landscapes issues of environmental violence became more political than mere technical and scientific questions. In a way, politics rules the environment.

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