I use here pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of the miners who I interviewed during this research. Interviews were carried out in Shona – the local language, and I translated them into English. I met up with Gundu who is aminer working around Mutanda Site and from our engagement he revealed certain complex cosmological features of the area:

In this area, there are myths associated with the old uses of the stone walls at Mutanda and we all believe old people of the past used to live and work inside the stone walls. Different kinds of animals like lions, zebras and buffaloes are sometimes seen in around this area. I think these are spiritual animals representing the ancient people because they do not attack us. More so, there are some taboos in this mountain which include the prohibition of disagreements during the mining. If we argue the *bhandi* (belt) will disappear. But if we work together as a team and in harmony our work runs smooth and we get gold (Gundu, Mutanda Site, 2016).

Similarly, Razor, who also works around Mutanda Site, spoke about belief systems and respect of the spirit of the land when they do their mining:

There are simple aspects and beliefs that we follow when mining in this mountain. You are not allowed to say vulgar words because you will disappear forever. Everyone around here knows that Mutanda is a sacred mountain where our ancestors used to live when they were mining gold. If you walk around you see a lot of tools that they were using in processing the gold in the past. These include hammerstones and other stone tools. Today as we work as *makorokozas*/miners in the same mountain - we also have guidelines that we follow so that we don’t disturb the spirit of our ancestors. The gold we get here is because of them so we must respect them as well. For, instance when one is getting into a shaft he should not be wearing any perfumes or lotions because the smell can infuriate the ancestors and thus they will withhold their gold from us. (Razor, Mutanda Site, 2016 ).

During dialogical interactions - one of the collaborators disclosed that they carry out ritual cleansing prior to the starting of mining operations:

In this area, before we started our operations - we brewed beer and offered it to ancestral spirits that are the owners of the mountains on which we undertake the mining. This ceremony was undertaken in order to seek guidance, protection as well as success in mining. A goat is also slaughtered by elderly members of the community who live in this area. Thereafter, they petitioned the ancestors by pouring traditional beer to the ground. They said by pouring beer on the ground they were quenching the beer thirst of the ancestors who lie buried somewhere in the area. This is the only way that spirits of the land would release the gold to us. Soon after conducting this ceremony the mining started and we began to get good grades because we had obtained permission from ancestors residing in Mutanda by appeasing them. (Kondo, Mutanda Site, 2016).

Pinjisi also elaborated on the ritual dimensions ofgold mining in the same conversation. He impressed on me that his ability to identify gold deposits at Mutanda was not just a simple hunch but rather he got a vision from his ancestors through a dream. In this dream, Pinjisi revealed that:

I had a recurring dream for several days in which I would see a yellow line moving downhill like a flowing river. Because the dream kept on coming to me – I realised that this was a message from the ancestors that I could not keep on ignoring. I decided to track uphill to find the source of this yellow line and thus what took me to this spot where we are working right now. (Pinjisi, Mutanda Site, 2016).

However, outside dreams, the other ritual proscriptions that were followed by miners at Mutanda were narrated by Samanyika – who works together with Pinjisi. He said:

We believe in several things, for instance as we will be working around here we will not allow one of us to go and make love with a woman and come back to the mine. However, if you know that you are dirty and was involved with a woman you will only be allowed to work on the ground mainly pulling the bucket tied on the rope but not touching the ore. If you touch the ore that brings bad luck and we will get nothing out of it – the gold will disappear. We also have a resting day every Thursday (*chisi*) and we don’t go to the mine as we follow the customary requirements of this area. Before we started mining we consulted traditional leaders of this area and they carried out a ritual cleansing exercise in the mountain- they brought with them beer calabashes together with snuff boxes – they sprinkled the beer mixed with the snuff onto the ground and made a request to the ancestors to allow us to mine. However, we were told not to temper with the freestanding walls as a show of respect to the ancestors who constructed them a long time ago. (Samanyika, Mutanda Site, 2016).

Therefore,the miners work and live with the spirits of their ancestors, who guide them in getting gold around Mutanda site. They also believed that the stone structures were constructed by the ancestors who once mined gold in the area:

We have also come to realise that the mountains with freestanding stone enclosures were not only used as hiding places during the war by our ancestors but were also used for gold mining. So maybe they were used more as gold hiding places and not necessarily as war forts. For us we just concluded that walls, hammerstones and exposed grinding surfaces are an indication that there was gold mining happening here in the past. For instance, if you look in the direction of this shaft which we currently are working on- you see that the tunnel is moving parallel to the walls (pointing at the walls in visible distance). We are therefore mining following the same direction using the wall as markers and thus where we are getting a lot of gold. (Aribhozho, Mutanda Site, 2016)