

The Socio-cultural organization of artisanal gold mining and its impacts on the local livelihood: The case of Kemogola mine site in southern-Mali.



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Dedication

To my late father Djibril Coulibaly

Acknowledgement

This work would not have been possible without the support of the hunters, the Ton-Boloma, and both landowners and the municipality Syentoula rural commune of Syentoula. I express my deep gratitude to all of them, their willingness to share information and take care of my safety in the gold mine during the whole fieldwork process.

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Glossary

As I mentioned in the text, the gold mine is a multi-cultural place where people have different ethnic background and languages. The miners have created some local words for communicating with each other and give meaning to things. Some of these concepts don't exist in the Malian national language (Bambara).

Bololabi or bi: Literally it means mark a goal with a hand (like football) but in miners' conception, *Bololabi or bi:* is a chance or opportunity given by the team to another team member to dig or pull the rope and test his/her luck in their mine. (This is their social solidarity system).

Damatigi muso: It means the wife who is the owner of the mine pit. But it is used by the miners to say the women who pulls the rope among the working team.

Furu baralaw: Literally it means in bambara the people who are cleaning the stomachs but for the miners it means the persons who re-work the former mine pits (mines already exploited and left by other diggers).

Furu deni: It means small marriage but the miners used it to refer to an illegal and temporary union between a man and a woman living in the gold mine.

Kaladjan: It means a long stick; but miners used it to refer to 'the pick-axe'.

Kaladjantigiw or chifuruw: Literally it means the diggers who work with the pick-axe but it just means "the underground diggers".

Klano: Is a person who is doing the gold mining as a main job. This concept doesn't exist in bambara

Ton-Boloma: The gold mine association

Abstract

The thesis explores the socio-cultural organization of the artisanal gold mine of Kemogola located in southern-Mali. I carried out this fieldwork during three months in the gold mine of Kemogola. Through the participant observation method with the extend use of the video camera recording and the block notes I gathered the empirical data which reflect social realities of my informants.

Indeed, I observed four main layers (actors) who are engaged in the gold mine management and its social organization. The hunters represent the police; they are in charge of the mine security. Those hunters work closely with the gold mine association members so-called Ton-Boloma. Together they implement their own rules of conducts and norms related to the safety and general well-being of the mine community.

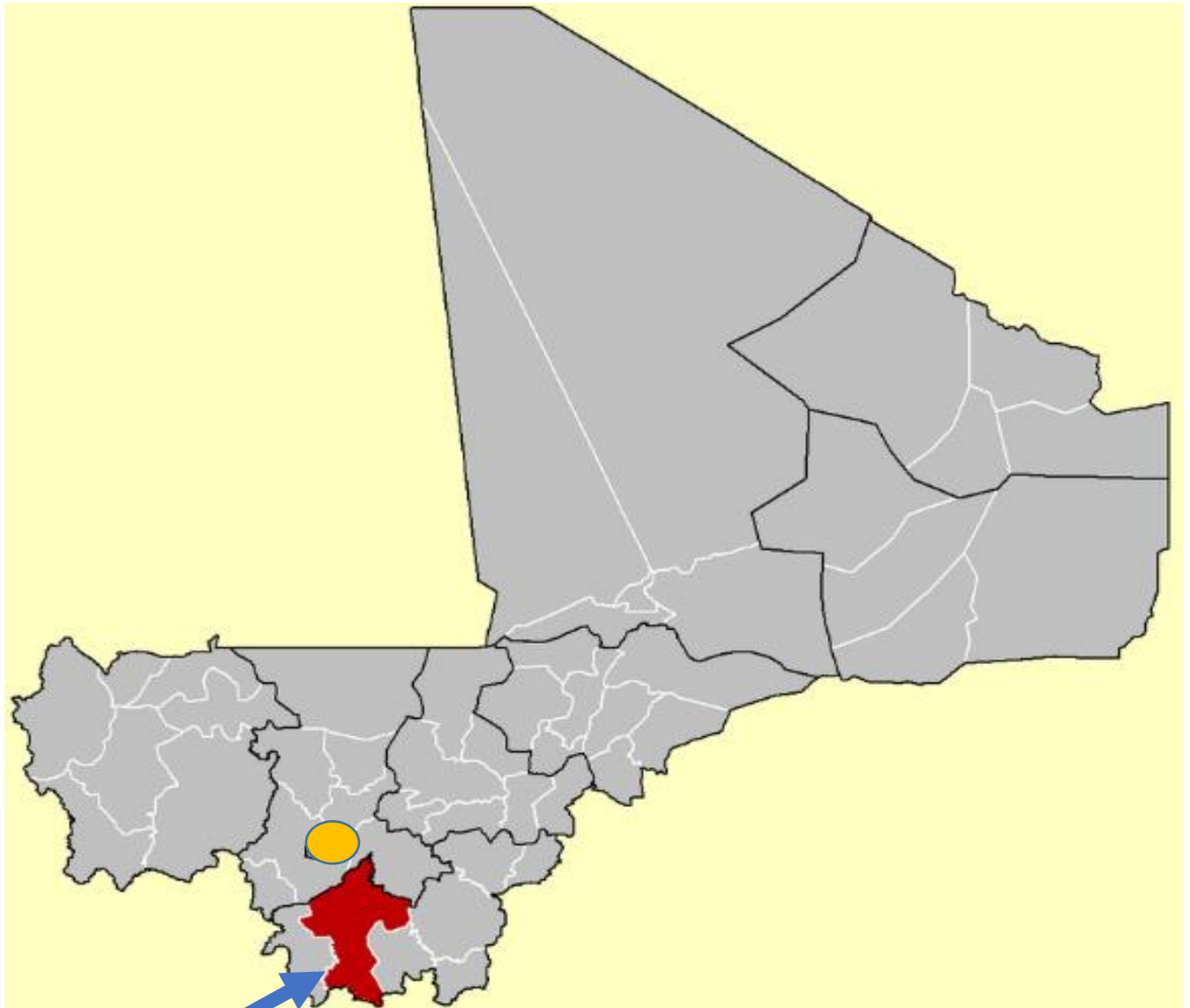
Moreover, the traditional authorities (landowners) and the modern authority represented by the municipality are also involved in the system and are working with the hunters and Ton-Boloma. After pegging and distributing mine plots to miners, they take money from each mine pit. Regarding to mining activity processes, before starting, the miners form some working teams and each person has a specific role. I observed that the activity has three main steps: digging, pulling the rope and washing the mud for gold.

The artisanal mining is an important activity in this local community. Today, there is a great influx of both urban and local peasant to the gold mine. During my investigation, I found that diverse and complex reasons explain their attractions to the mine.


Further, the miners come from different areas from Mali and neighboring countries, with different identities, languages and cultural background and their contact with the natives of Kemogola have had an impact on the local lifestyle, producing a dynamic cultural mix and exchanges.

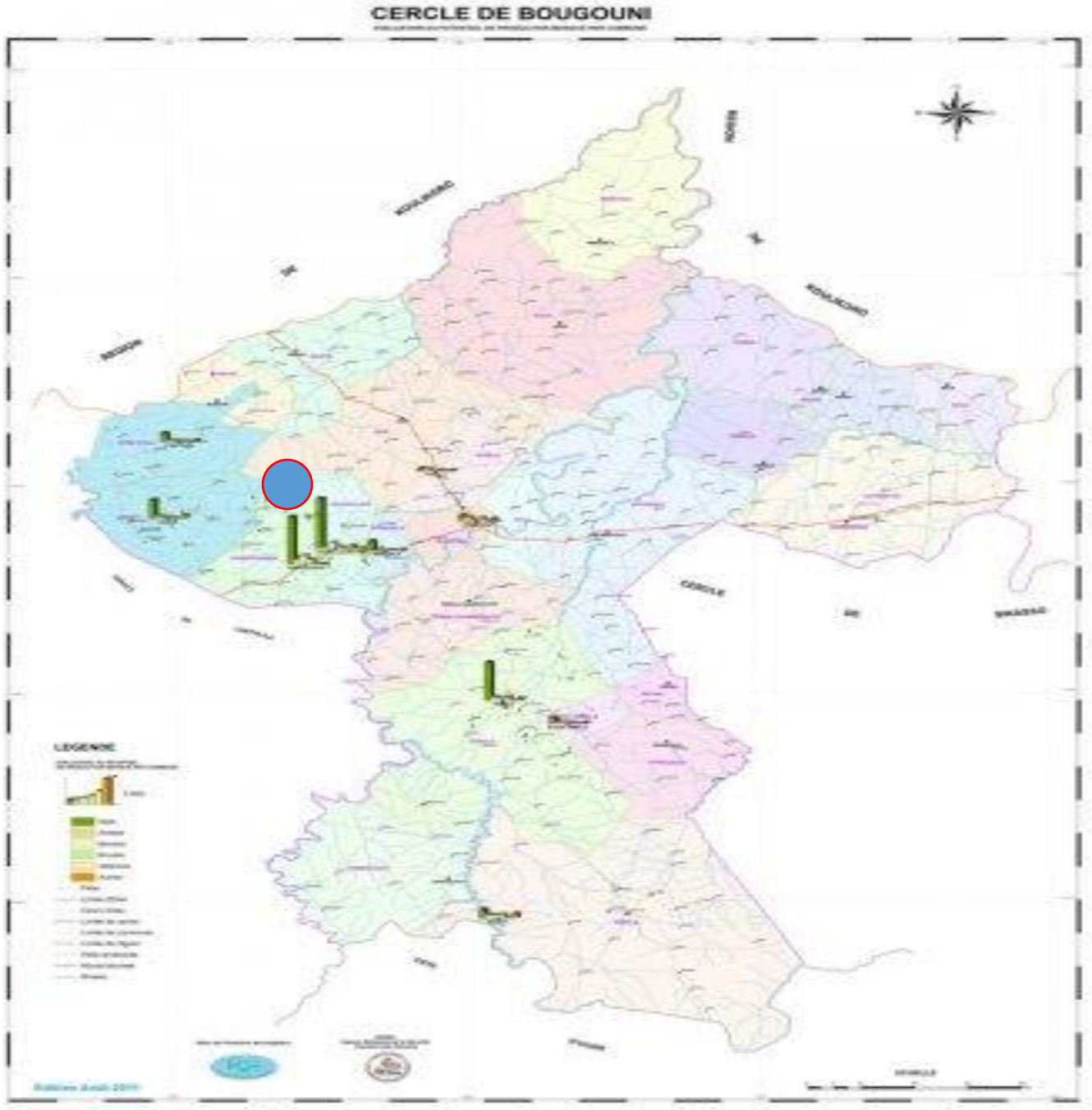
Keys words: Socio-cultural Organization, gold mine, hunters, Ton-Boloma, landowners, municipality, rules of conduct, miners.

Map1: Republic of Mali - Location of Bougouni



Bougouni

 **Bamako (Capital of Mali)**



Source: http://www.mapnall.com/fr/Carte-g%C3%A9ographique-Cercle-de-Bougouni_1323266.html

Map 2   **Location of the gold mine of Kemogola**

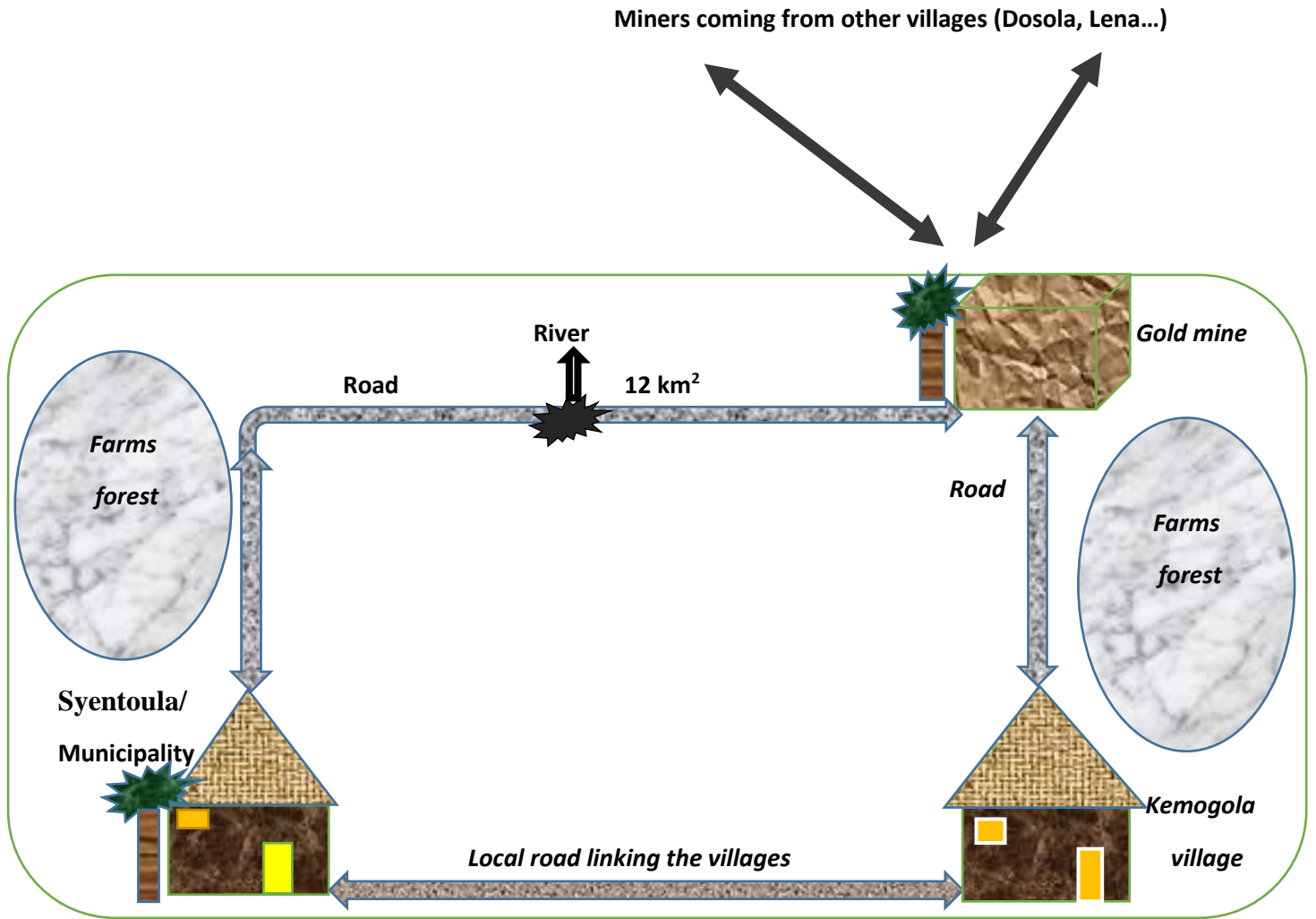


Figure 1: Interaction system in the living environment between the two villages (Syentoula Kemogola) and the gold mine.

The municipality is located in Syentoula village and Yacouba also is living there but everyday morning like other miners, they drive or walk to the gold mine, which is located in Kemogola land (owners of the mine). The inhabitants of the two villages and others neighboring villages miners' meet in the gold mine.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Motivation and background

Agriculture is becoming more difficult for local farmers in recent years. This dramatic phenomenon is linked to the climate change and drought. The poor rainfall created a disequilibrium (disjuncture) between the peasants and their expectations in Mali.

In general, it has been noticed that the progress of the desert has had a huge impact on farmers' incomes over these last years in West Africa. The livelihood conditions of these populations have gradually changed and deteriorated. In order to deal with this socio-environmental change and meet the households' expectations, the majority of local farmers in Mali are migrating to the artisanal gold mines.

This current dramatic situation faced by those rural populations is also linked up with a longer history of shifting processes of the rural economy in the community of Bougouni. Living in a global world, struggling with the internal and external factors, these population lifestyles have been heavily stricken by the ongoing socio-economic transformation, conflicts, drought, mismanagement etc. In doing so as an alternative way of living, people are attracted to artisanal gold mines searching for fortune and good life.

Being a son of a local farmer in southern-Mali (Baramba), where farming was the most important and dominant activity, it wasn't combine with any other activity in our community. But, in recent years, I have been inspired to see other community farmers combining farming to gold mining.

Indeed, the artisanal gold mining¹ is not a recent phenomenon; it has been practiced some years ago, not only in Mali but also in other countries of West Africa by a minority of people. But nowadays, this activity is becoming a growing industry.

Further, the reading of some literatures and the Malian daily newspapers written about the dramatic social situation in artisanal gold mines as the collapsing of mine pits, risks, accidents, child labour

¹ Artisanal gold mining refers to informal mining activities using low technology or with minimal machinery mainly in developing nations. **Source--Human Rights Watch**, *Artisanal Mines Produce Gold with Child Labor*, Hazardous Work, Mercury Poisoning, and Disease, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/12/06/mali-artisanal-mines-produce-gold-child-labor>

and health issues have increased my motivation on this topic. Since then, I had been in contact with some miners since 2011 in Bougouni when visiting one of my brothers. During our conversation about the activity and how the mine was organized by the actors, I got more motivation. Among those miners, my brother Yacouba Coulibaly was included, all of them were working at this time in the artisanal gold mine of Soumaya which is located in the commune of Ouroun (neighboring community of Kemogola). It is a well-known mine site in Mali. When I got admission at the University of Tromsø (Uit) in 2015, I finally decide to choose the artisanal gold mine as a field of study for my master thesis. In the beginning, my perspective was vague because I had never been in the gold mine.

Bindra (2014) in his case study, '*Small-scale gold mines in Mali*', observed that: 'Despite the hardships, many people flock to the gold mines in Mali's south and west to test their luck. Many came from elsewhere in Mali or from neighboring countries such as Burkina Faso, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire, chasing after rumors about striking it rich'. When I arrived in the gold mine of Kemogola for my field research, I observed a similar experience, people coming from different areas, mixed up and working together. Once I got in touch with them I realized that the setting had a specific social organization and the interactions between workers during the activities were well-coordinated. Hence, I reoriented my perspective and focus on that in order to understand this social system.

Indeed, the remoteness and inaccessibility of gold deposit made it very difficult for the government to have control on it and the lack of the State rules in the area has given opportunities to some local groups to take over. They try to organize the gold mine and implement their own laws and rules of conduct for mining processes. They have defined also some criteria for access to land and furthermore there are always land conflicts between neighboring communities and between gold miners themselves. Land questions seem to be related to some common interest and conflicts in general throughout the world as Malinowski (1961: 113) observed: 'Land is unique among human possessions as a gift of God or nature which affects and benefits and is available to the community as a whole. Human beings live by it, and sometimes for it. It is an object which in Africa determines fundamental policies and is the key to good and bad relations between Black and White'.

The social organization of Kemogola gold mine is common with some artisanal gold mines in southern Mali. Mining generates some significant incomes not only for the local population but also for the local administration. Today, there is a growing influx and motivation for men, women and children in this artisanal gold mine. The site is becoming the main workplace for many rural peasants. The mine of Kemogola is a multi-cultural and dynamic place, with a specific social organization and it is included in every category of individuals from various ethnic group, languages, identities and cultures. During the activities process, the workers make up different teams and each actor has a specific role in the mining field.

I carried out my fieldwork from April to the end of July. In doing so I used the video camera as a tool for data recording and the block note throughout. The discovery process has been my main approach and after my field research, I made an ethnographic film of 34 minutes Titled: '*The Gold Hunters*'. The film portrayed the social reality a local farmer "Yacouba Coulibaly" performing his everyday life with his co-workers in the artisanal gold mine. In addition, the film reveals the social organization of the mine and the activity process as well. The main message of the film is to show the rural peasants' coping strategies by combining mining and farming in order to keep up their livelihood.

2. Literature

There is a no literature about the artisanal gold mine of Kemogola but similar case studies have been conducted by some scholars in other gold mines in Mali and in neighboring countries.

Tanya Kaur Bindra (2014) focused his reflexion on the social problems raised in the artisanal gold mine. He highlighted the poor working conditions of miners in the mines. In the same perspective, the Human Rights Watch report (2011); (2013) revealed the socio-health and environmental problems related to the artisanal gold mines in southern-Mali. Their reviews were mainly based on the disadvantages of mining on the local populations; especially the involvement of children by their parents in the mines, non-education, the risk and accident, poor hygiene conditions and foods, the collapsing of mine pits and so forth.

Seydou Keita (2001) in, '*Étude sur les mines artisanales et les exploitations minières à petite échelle au Mali*', had undertaken an exhaustive study starting from an historical and socio-economical perspective of mining in Mali since 1325, passing through the colonial period (1900-

1960s) to present day. He mentioned how the gold trade served for the development of the Malian empire and Ghana, and how these countries supplied the Western countries before the arrival of gold multinational companies. Keita observed that the social organization of work in the artisanal gold mines followed some well-established patterns, generally based on customary law approved by all members of the community. He noted that they were organized in group "association" based on family relationship. Access to land is based on some criteria (...) the rules and norms are established endowed with sanctions, (2001:16).

The social organization has been shortly mentioned by Keita but he didn't give more detail about the position and role of different actors in the field.

Ledin and Pedersen (1996); Ogola J. S. et al. (2001) in Kenya, Kevin Drace et al., (2012) in Mozambique, Kitula (2004) and Nicholas Imparato (2009) in Tanzania focused their description on the environmental and socio-economic impacts of mining on the local livelihoods.

Hyndman (1994); Patria K. Townsend (2009) in their case study in Papua Quinea both observed that men and women hunted and worked in gardens, growing many crops (...) collected and ate fish, frogs, wild greens, and ferns before the opening of the mine. But with the construction of the mine, Wopkaimin (community) life has changed drastically: men started to work in the mine company as an unskilled wage laborer, eating in the company dining halls, drinking beer, buying meat and fish for their families.

Indeed, the gold mines have been approached and thought by many writers as anarchic places accumulating many social issues. Hence, I noticed that most of these intensive literatures focused more on the mine wastes, its environmental impact and health issues, but the social system made up around these mines, its social organization and the mining activity process itself have been minimized. Most of their concerns focused on the drawbacks of mining activities on the populations, but they didn't pay more attention to the internal organization of those mines sites by different actors involved in the field. Therefore, I focus my research on this level. My main goal is to contribute a good understanding of the function and management of artisanal gold mines in Southern-Mali, particularly the mine of Kemogola. In doing so, in order to approach the social organization of Kemogola artisanal gold mine; I have formulated some research questions as follows:

- How is the gold mine organized by the different actors involved in field? What are the rules of conduct and norms established? What are the defined criteria for getting access to land?
- The gold mine is a dynamic field and its management is endowed with power and internal conflicts between the mine organizers. In this case I will explore how power issues, roles and statuses in the social hierarchy are negotiated by and between the actors.
- How did they create or form working teams and integrate newcomers to mining activities?
- What attracts people from different areas to the artisanal gold mine of Kemogola?

At the end of this paper, I will look at the socio-economic and environmental impact of mining on the local community.

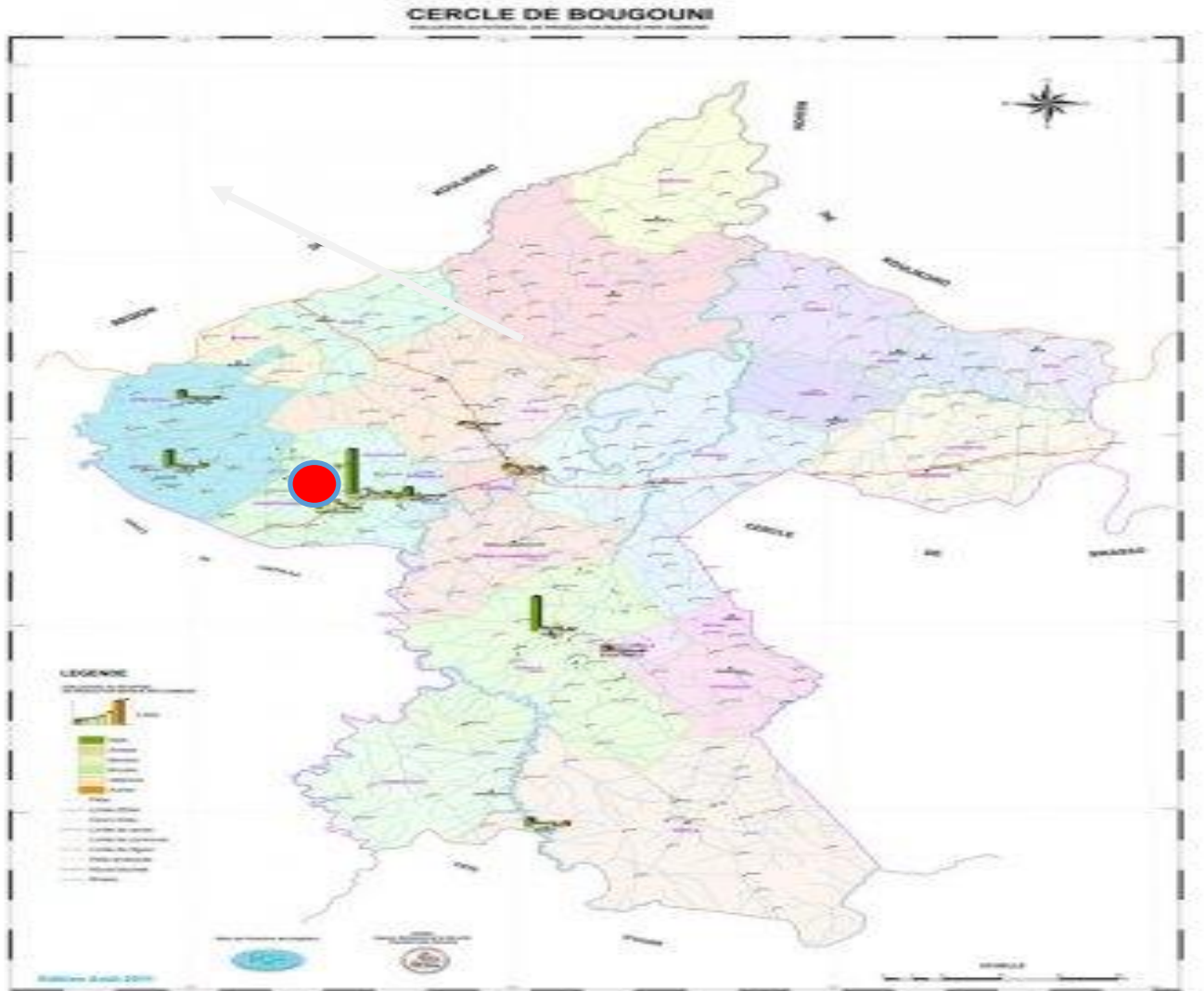
The thesis is divided in seven chapters. The second part will focus on the presentation of social and physical context. In the third chapter, I will present the methodology and the theoretical framework that I used to gather and analyze data.

In the fourth chapter I will describe the social cultural organization of the gold mine and the role of different actors in the field; how the hunters, the gold mine association members ‘Ton-Boloma’ interact with each other in relation to the landowners and the municipality so as to keep up the proper functioning of the mine. In this chapter, I will present also a detailed information about the norms and rules of conduct established regarding the mine management.

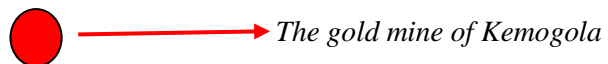
In the fifth chapter I will give a description of the mining activities, from the digging of mine pits to the washing of mud and how different miners form working teams based upon some internal criteria. The sixth chapter will reveal the motivation or attraction of miners to the artisanal gold mine. In this part I will present some case studies of four miners. And the last chapter will deal with the socio-economic and environmental impact of mining on the local livelihood. I will describe the gold trading process, and show how the mining activities have made change on the local cultural and farming lifestyle.

Chapter 2: Presentation of the field and context

2.1. Presentation of the field



Map 2: Cercle de Bougouni



The rural commune of Syentoula is located in northwest Bougouni district in Mali and it is consisted of eleven villages: Syentoula, Chambougou Linguegoro, Tinkeleni, Tienko, Yerefounela, Nohi, Lena, Dialakoroni, Mafeleni, Dossola and Kemogola where I have done my research. The commune covers an area of 660 km².

According to the Regional Direction for Planning and Statistics (DRPS)², the rural commune of Syentoula has a population of 11,597 inhabitants in 2015, with 5,757 men and 5,840 women. But the village of Kemogola, where I have done my research is inhabited by 1,561 people and 98% of this population is engaged in the gold mine. There are three main religions, Islam the most dominant, Christianity and Animism. The last religion is based on the adoration of fetishes. The place is a peasant community based on land growing. But in past few decades the agricultural productivity has fallen. This phenomenon is due to the outstanding climate change which is characterized by drought and the progressive advancement of dessert throughout the Sahel band.

This dramatic situation has led to famine and starvation in homes and many young people migrated to big cities and others even tried to immigrate into Western countries³. So whenever there was poor rainfall, the only alternative for the rural population was to immigrate or become a nomad by looking for a better life.

Nowadays, the opening of artisanal gold mines has attracted many youngsters because mine sites have been considered a workplace where they can realize their dreams. Currently, peasants' immigration and nomadism have reduced a lot in this local community. Many rural and urban population are oriented into the artisanal gold mine of Kemogola. Created in 2010, today there is more than 4,500 miners in this mine site, and workers are spread out through the forest. Most of this population consists mainly of Bambara, Fulani, Bozo, Dogon, Malinke, Minianka... and many other ethnic groups from foreign countries. They are settled around the gold mine by creating hamlets. Some of these people have spent several years without returning to their homes and some have even lost contact with their families. The mine site has become their main residence forever. The formation of social groups and associations have emerged for the organization and management of the mining activities.

In the commune of Syentoula, the main economic activity was agriculture, and it was considered the most important and dominant activity for the local peasant, but today farming has become a secondhand activity for many local farmers in favor of the artisanal gold mining. This phenomenon, according to many farmers, is due the poor rain fall and they claim that farming income cannot take on families' needs anymore. The local peasants are more oriented to gold

² Monographie Sommaire de la Commune, Direction Régionale du Plan et de la Statistique 2015.

³ According to Faraman Bagayogo, Mayor of Syentoula, (Ousmane Coulibaly, Interview of fieldwork, 13/05/2016).

mining in order to meet their expectations. Today in the gold mine the gold mine association (Ton-Boloma) and the hunters in collaboration with the municipality and the landowners are playing the role of the State. They set up their own rules and norms about the mine management. The hunters and the Ton-Boloma represent the soldiers, they are maintaining the security. In addition, they peg and distribute mine plots and collect the taxes from miners.

2.2. Gold mining history in Mali

The artisanal and small-scale gold mining has a long history in Mali. Since its designation empire of Ghana from 300-1240 AD to the present Republic of Mali, gold has been mined for many centuries by a minority of population through an artisanal way, using low technology, labor intensive excavation and processing method.

Similarly, the country was known as one of the major exporter of gold in the Sahel zone, an illustrative example is that in 1324, the Malian well-known emperor Kanku Moussa brought 8 tons of gold on his pilgrimage to Mecca. Large West African kingdoms, including the Mali Empire (approximately 1235-1400), built their wealth on gold from the Bambouk region⁴ of Western Mali and the Trans-Saharan gold trade (...) Gold has remained a central commodity during colonialism and in Mali's postcolonial economy. (Human Rights Watch 2011). Gold has been exploited for hundreds of years ago in Koulikoro region especially in Kangaba and in Sikasso region as well. Today, these two regions (Kayes and Sikasso) contain important multinational gold companies, which are operating and exporting large quantities of gold and Mali is currently the third largest gold producer in Africa, after South Africa and Ghana, and the thirteenth largest gold producer in the world. The Malian government is more focused on the large -scale mining. Nowadays, in Kayes region, we have some famous multinational gold companies in the mine of Sadiola, Kenieba, Tabakoto, Yatela, Loulo, Kodieran etc. and in the region of Sikasso we have the mine of Kalana⁵ created in 1985, Syama in 1990, Sadiola in 1997, Morila in 2000 etc.

⁴ The main gold mining regions lie in Western and Southern Mali, specifically in the Kéniéba area (Kayes region) on the Senegalese-Malian border **-Source-**Human Rights Watch, *Mali Artisanal Mines Produce Gold with Child Labor, Hazardous Work, Mercury Poisoning, and Disease*, December 2011,

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/12/06/mali-artisanal-mines-produce-gold-child-labor>

⁵ - Seydou Keita. (2001), *Etude sur les Mines Artisanales et Les Exploitations Minières à Petite Echelle au Mali*, Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development, 80, London, IIED, pp. 1-54.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Theoretical framework

During my fieldwork, I used the qualitative method in order to gain insights in to the informants' everyday lives. In doing so, the discovery process as an approach and the participant observation method (Spradley 1980) including the interview (structured) were used by living there, spending time and sharing life with gold miners in order to find out the local knowledge.

In addition to those methods and techniques, extensive use of video camera recordings as a tool for collecting audio visual materials and the notebook as a supplementary device for field notes were also used for data gathering during all the fieldwork process.

3.1. Starting point

I planned to carry out my research in the gold mine of Soumaya located in the rural commune of Ouroun. Unfortunately, due to security issues, I was obliged to give up this area because, in 19th April 2016, Yacouba Coulibaly who was supposed to be my informant came back to the gold mine of Kemogola in the rural commune of Syentoula where he currently lives. This mine site is located just 25 kilometers far away from the gold mine of Soumaya. Yacouba said to me during our conversation by telephone, "There is no security, and more so, there is always some conflicts between miners themselves, fighting for mine' plots every time, and those conflicts were ending up in some killings."

So, instead of Soumaya, I finally changed my fieldwork location although I maintained by keeping the same project and informant because most of artisanal gold mines in Southern-Mali have the same characteristic and same social organization, although they may differ in their scale.

The artisanal gold mine of Kemogola is commonly called "*kemo-ko*" meaning the river of Kemogola, and artisanal gold mine is called "*Damanda*" by the Malian natives in general.

3.2. Entering the field and the negotiation processes

Except reading some literature and newspaper about gold mining, I have never been to an artisanal gold mine before. It was my first time to experience it. But, thanks to my former relationships not only with my brother Yacouba but also with Faraman Bagayogo, who is the

current mayor of the commune that I established some years ago, my accessibility to the gold mine was not a big challenge.

My brother is now an inhabitant of the village and a security member of the gold mine, this opportunity gave me more space and trust to carry out my fieldwork.

When I introduced myself to my informants and told them about my fieldwork, I explained to them the goal of the use of the video camera. This device has been introduced as a tool for recording visual materials which will be used as data, but also reflects my presence in the field. My proposal was quite understood. It was not an issue for them. Those actors were familiar with the camera, because some miners explained to me that some students used to photograph them just two months ago.

The mine site of Kemogola is populated with more than 4,500 miners, they are spread out through the forest. During my three month stay in the field, I realized that ethnographic research is a discovery process, and we can't take anything for granted. A lot of events happen that I hadn't expected. In the same way, some actors have been included in my project during the fieldwork process. The fieldwork imposes a new reality which can be different from the researcher's expectations. Among this crowd of people, I manage to focus on some actors including Yacouba, chosen as my main informant who has played an important role for my acceptance in the field.

3.3. Yacouba from brotherhood to a main informant

- Who is Yacouba; why him as a main informant?

Yacouba Coulibaly comes from Baramba, which is a small village located in Koutiala (Sikasso region). He is a member of a large-family belonging to the Minianka ethnic group. He is 45-years-old and a father of four sons and four daughters. Because of farming land shortage in his home, combined with some repetitive years of drought, Yacouba was obliged to immigrate with his whole family in 2005, to find a new place in order to be able to meet his families' needs. Finally, the village of Syentoula in Bougouni district has been his last destination. In this commune, the landowners lent him a certain number of hectares and so forth, Yacouba started farming and building up his own concession with his family. In 2008, Yacouba faced a series of social problems:

First, the owner of the farm did not provide him a cultivated plot; secondly, in the same year (2008) the rainfall was poor and Yacouba was not able to keep up the balance. Being the Head of his family, his main alternative was to join the artisanal gold mine.

Nowadays, he is an unavoidable person in the gold mine of Kemogola. As I wrote in my agenda (project plan progress), I met Yacouba on April, 22nd. The main point of this meeting was for me to explain my project to him and how to make it doable. That day Yacouba and I planned the different possibilities of realizing of my project together.

Yacouba is a very well-known person in this community, plus he has the status of husband and family Head, and he is a farmer and hunter commonly called "Dozo". He is also a member of the gold mine association famously called "*Ton-Boloma*". Yacouba is known mostly through his gold mining as a talented person and he is involved in both activities hence my choice for him as a main informant. He is living in the village of Syentoula but he is working in the gold mine of Kemogola.



Figure 2 : Yacouba Coulibaly

3.4. Towards my acceptance

My brother Yacouba has been the main facilitator, the gateway for me to get access into the field. When I arrived in the village, after a few hours Yacouba took me to the head of the village. He introduced me to him as his brother. After the greeting, I explained my purpose, and it was quite understood by the head and he welcomed me.

On the 23rd of April, I joined Yacouba in the gold mine, and he introduced me to Sekou Bagayogo head of hunter groups, and Sekou also called Yacouba Bagayogo landowner and head of the gold mine association (Ton-Boloma). On the following day, all of them sat together, and I was introduced again as a student who came to do research in the gold mine.

So, Sekou took the floor and said:

“Minianka Yacou (Yacouba Coulibaly), you have been working with us for many years as member of mine safety, I think the person who is a member of your family belongs to all of us as well. So he is not an outsider or foreigner. At any case, we can’t refuse his research. We are available for you... so we will inform all the miners who are working in our gold mine. If you get a single problem let us know as soon possible, our members are everywhere. You know Ousmane (researcher), here we decide and control everything in this gold mine (...) you don’t need to worry, you are welcome...”⁶

That day we were in the hamlet of the gold mine, sitting down on the floor.

During my meeting with them, they insured I would be taken care of through all my filming process and they told me to never hesitate to contact them in case of problems. So, I have been working closely with the leading persons of the gold mine. After introducing me in the field, the next day, Yacouba starts his digging with his co-workers. And then I started filming and taking notes. The photo in figure 3 below shows Yacouba and his team in the mining process.

⁶ Stated by Sekou Bagayago, head of hunters, fieldwork, 23/04/2016



Figure 3: Yacouba's team starts with pit digging

Source: *Coulibaly O. Fieldwork in Kemogola, 24/04/2016.*

3.5. Data gathering process

“While empirical data never speaks for itself, anthropologists cannot speak without data. Even when couched in the most interpretive terms, anthropology requires observation- indeed, often field observation- and relies on empirical data in ways and to degrees that distinguish it as an academic practice from both literary and Cultural Studies”. (Trouillot, 2003:128).

I used the Participant Observation as a method and the notebook during my whole fieldwork process to collect the empirical data.

3.5.1. Participant Observation through the video camera

In order to get to the heart of the organizational matter and the mining processes; the participant observation presented by (Spradley 1980) has been used during the whole data gathering process

Spradley (1980:5) argued that: ‘When ethnographers study other cultures they must deal with three fundamental aspect of human experience: what people do, what people know, and the things people make and use’.

Accordingly, I approached the mine as a social setting, in fact miners are actors, doing mining activities in a specific place, having those different aspects in mind I experienced the gold mine. In doing so I was sharing life with gold miners, spending time, eating food, asking questions, participating in daily conversation and activities. In addition, the extensive use of the video camera recording helped me a lot to grasp this social dynamic. I was hanging around in the gold mine filming miners when they were performing different mining activities, organizing stuff, digging shafts, pulling ropes and panning for gold. I was deeply involved with them recording information which was happening in front of the camera, following the action in the context of miners' everyday lives as much as possible. I went into the mine pit thirty meters (30m deep) with the camera and film miners when working underground. I pulled the rope in order to feel and understand the conditions under which the miners live.

Moreover, as it has been suggested that: *"The film-maker does not impose direction, but instead allows the space for the film to be heavily shaped by its protagonists. Rather than constructing the film around preconceptions and what is already known, the film-maker approaches film-making as a process of discovery"* (Grimshaw and Ravetz 2005:31).

With the observational cinema approach (Henley 2004), I was observing and recording event as it was happening in front of the camera's viewfinder. Miners' gestures, speeches, postures, sensation/feelings and interaction with each other have been visualized and taken into account.

In addition to the participant observation, I used some interviews in which both of us (interviewer and interviewee) were involved in order to give a better understanding of the subject and produce a fruitful knowledge of the social field.

Furthermore, the gold mine is a large -scale operation and it was my first time to get access to the setting. My main protagonist Yacouba is my brother and we lived together more than twenty years ago. This former brotherhood relation has facilitated my integration to the mining community. Without Yacouba, I don't have any background knowledge about the mining area. I was an outsider because everything was new for me. But, by getting in contact with the rest of miners, creating relationships and interacting with them, I finally get to know and shape my own space. As it has been advised by Malinowski: '...the ethnographer has not only to spread his nets in the right place, and wait for what will fall onto them. He must be an active huntsman, and drive his quarry into them and follow it up to its most inaccessible lairs. And that leads us to the more active methods of pursuing ethnographic evidence' (Malinowski 1922:8).

In the end, from the data collection process to the finalization with the film, I realized that the use of the video camera allowed me to take into account many parameters of the field. As Jack Rollwagen, (1988:40), argues: "*Film has the capacity to condense and synthesize with economy an enormous amount of visual information, and thus acts successfully as a supplement to written analysis without ever replacing it*".

The camera gave a great opportunity not only for the researcher but also to the audience to get more detailed and fruitful information about the society or the investigated community. The interaction between the informants and the researcher in the production of knowledge process also provides a good understanding of the social space by the audience. From this perspective, the construction of the knowledge becomes processual and shared. This point has been well-highlighted by Arntsen and Holtedahl (2005:68), when they wrote: "*The screening of film sequences literally gave the audience a possibility to see and hear both two other partners' presence in the anthropological research process*".

3.5.2. The Bloc note as a supplement tool

The use of field notes was very important for me in the sense that I was not familiar with some local concepts and expressions. The gold mine is a meeting place for various ethnic groups speaking different dialects, therefore miners have developed some local concepts and codes for communicating to each other. In order to go in depth into their daily lives, I spent some time taking notes asking question to get some explanations.

In addition, I noted my own observations and remarks of everything which was happening and said in front of me.

Furthermore, the reading of some previous literature gave me some guidelines when experiencing the gold mine. The notation of these local expressions and cultural codes helped me a lot in the writing process. I was using the bloc note when I became tired of carrying the camera. After all I realized that there is an unavoidable complement between the video camera and the bloc note. While I could not shoot all the scenes which were playing out in front of the camera, it was impossible for me to note down all scenes that I had seen and heard in the field. Thus, the camera and the bloc note were complementary to each other. The use of the camera recording was limited at specific times, and scenes chosen by the " researcher" and the implicit knowledge has been taken into account by the field notes.

3.6. Difficulties encountered in the fieldwork

I struggled with some challenges that I faced in the gold mine of Kemogola.

-First problem was the transportation and accessibility to the gold mine, because it was located around 12 kilometers far away from my residence and there was no proper means of transportation, no car or bus.

In addition, the local road (path) was very difficult to use. Every day I used the ‘mototaxi’ in the morning to join the gold mine and come back when the mine was closed.

- Secondly, the gold mine of Kemogola is a big place with at least 4,500 miners coming from different villages and regions inside the country and others from neighboring countries of Mali. Since the scale of the field was very large, it was very difficult for me to map all the processes and get an overview with my camera. When I arrived in the gold mine, I noticed that following only my main informant will not be enough for me to map and understand both the social organization and the mining processes itself. Hence there was the need to broaden not only my field but also my vision. It was difficult to follow when different interesting events were happening in both parts: the gold mining processes and the hunters’ and the members of the gold mine association (Ton-Boloma) activities.

- Thirdly, every day I met newcomers and some of them were not aware of my presence. Many of them were reluctant in front of the camera. Some miners refused to be filmed and in the case, that the different pits were very close each other, it was difficult to focus on one team without having some images of others teams' members on the LCD screen. Every time, I was obliged to renegotiate with those newcomers in order to get access as my informant was very dynamic, hanging around between different pits. Another problem was that many workers wanted me also to film them during the mining processes, but my main focus was Yacouba's team. This situation was a bit difficult for me; to explain the case of this miner who feels very proud and feels comfortable being photographed.



Source: *Coulibaly O. Fieldwork in Kemogola, 27/05/2016*

Figure 4: *A gold digger feeling happy and comfortable in front of the camera.*

- Furthermore, the gold mine is a very dangerous place that requires care, it is very easy to get material damages, to get sick or to fall in an old mine pit, because the miners dig up everywhere and after exploiting, they just leave those pits and move somewhere else. The other difficulties were related to my personal experiences of being a researcher.

Doing research in a multicultural place has its assets and disadvantages. In fact, being from southern Mali but in a different community, I share some common cultural patterns with the natives. As it has been taught by (Robertson, 2003) that, *"Doing fieldwork is about submitting oneself to those experiences (eating food, getting the jokes); and it relies on the anthropologist developing relationship of mutual trust and respect with those s/he has chosen to live among"*.

My experience with the miners was a bit challenging due to some series of sad events and cultural shock which happened during my research processes.

Indeed, miners come from different areas exhibiting different lifestyles and beliefs so some practices were not common in my cultural background.

First, in my home community where I grew up, the old women at a certain age stayed home and are retired from all physical jobs but in this community, many old men and women were struggling digging and pulling the rope for a living. This fact was very strange for my cultural understanding. In the gold mine, certain old people beg for money and food.

As analysis, I observed that the dislocation of large-families in nuclear families is affecting rural communities of Africa. Before in big families the collectivity used to take care of older people, but with the division these types of social solidarities are disappearing. All older people have to find their own way of living. This phenomenon explains the involvement of older people into mining activities.

Secondly, my brother Yacouba Coulibaly was working underground, dealing with danger and risk. At all times, I was worried and it was very difficult for me to keep a peace of mind, because the collapsing of pit is very frequent. Sometimes it was tough for me, because I was always plunging into a long internal reflection especially when comparing my life coming from Norway to these miners who were struggling to live. Having very limited money means I am not able to support my brother; I have been shocked. It was painful. I stayed up with them eating food, drinking tea but at times, I fell sick.

On May 5th, the mine collapsed and killed a miner. It was my first time to attend this kind of death event and during the rest of the day, I stayed away from my bloc notes and camera. This experience was hard to live with. Just a few days after, a pregnant woman also fell in a pit but hopefully she was rescued thanks to the Ton-Boloma members. Those series of sad events took me to "another world". It was the toughest experiences in my life.

But at the same time, despite the occurrence of these dramatic and sad events, I realized the rest of miners were living their normal lives. I could not feel any worries or sadness on their faces. From these experiences, I understood that there are many ways not only of being a human but also to feel and experience things.

My experience in the gold mine was an important and unforgettable moment in life. But at the same time, I had some good moments with miners, because I learned a lot from them especially during the mining processes and about the mine organization. I learned many new concept “words” which do not exist in our national language (Bambara) but they are created by the miners and used in the gold mine as ‘code’ of communicating and to give meaning to things (see glossary).

In addition, the cultural diversity of miners helped me to understand many of their ordinary cultural practices when it comes to making sacrifices. They have various ritual practices and beliefs. In this place, people perceive and interpret things in many ways. For example, when I was filming and asking questions, I was perceived and thought of by a woman as a “*lazy guy*” for her I was not working. I should take a pick-axe, jump into a pit and work underground; this is “*man’s work*” as she said. For her, filming is not a job and it doesn’t benefit much.

The beginning of the fieldwork was difficult but by the middle of June to the end of July I got used to their way of living and the rest was easy for me to handle.

3.7. Doing anthropology at home: challenges and perspectives

I am from the same family and same father as Yacouba Coulibaly but I have been away for a while for study. Making ethnographic research in my own family inevitably implies some challenges. ‘Doing ethnographic fieldwork involves alternating between the insider and outsider experience, and having both simultaneously’, Claimed: Spradley (1980:57).

I was switching between the two perspectives, using some personal strategies in order to deal with some issues.

First, the main challenge that I faced during my fieldwork was the internal conflict in my own family. Yacouba doesn’t have a good relationship with his wife nor his children and many times he fought with his wife, Sali Troare. Being the only brother of Yacouba, his wife wanted me to intervene in this conflict. Sometimes she called and explained to me the family problem with

her relationship with Yacouba and she was inviting me to talk with Yacouba in order to find a solution. Yacouba's wife was working in the gold mine everyday but she never came to Yacouba's mine pit or joined his team to pull the rope or wash the mud.

On the other side, Yacouba's sons Madou and Lassina who are my nephews were also explaining their problem with their father to me. Yacouba left all the farming activities to them and the children were struggling a lot. He was not earning enough money from the gold mine. During the raining season when he came back home, he began to sell the cereal and chickens in order to buy tea and cigarettes. Selling cereal was leading to famine in the family.

Both his wife and sons were explaining to me these family issues. This situation was a big challenge for me. Being a member of the family I cannot withdraw from my responsibilities but at the same time being a searcher (outsider), I could not take certain position because it can influence on the results of my research.

As a personal strategy during my stay with the children at the farm, I helped them a lot in the activities and many times I bought some tea and clothes for them. Later they forgot Yacouba and continued working.

In regard to the wife's issue, I didn't intervene between them. I just kept observing and she was not happy with that. This situation affected my research a bit. Therefore, Sali is a bit absent in my film, because she was trying to avoid the camera and furthermore, she told me she didn't want to be interviewed. The fact that I was always following Yacouba and didn't manage to solve the problem meant that she kept a certain distance but she didn't dispute with me and we are continuing our family relationship. Therefore, most of the family visual materials (scene) are focus only on the father and his children.

Moreover, my position of researcher and little brother of Yacouba was also a bit problematic for me in the gold mine despite explaining the purpose of my project. I have been perceived by certain miners as making discrimination in the gold mine and they said that I was not concerned about others miners' problem and focused more on the team of my brother, Yacouba. To deal with this issue I was sometimes obliged to go around and film some of these miners in order to keep the balance. After that, I didn't get any problem from the gold mine.

3.8. Theoretical framework

3.8.1. Globalization and Social organization

The revolution in information and communication technologies has made the world look more uniform and interconnected. (Long 2000). The advance of science and technology has brought the world into a new era. The individuals are no longer isolated. There is an ongoing interaction and exchange between the local and the global. The everyday communication and interaction are affecting and reorienting people's behavior and cultural lifestyles. Various cultures are created and diffused.

The world became more diversified and complex. The globalization has made a radical change in all domain of human affairs. The acceleration of flow: people, commodities, capital technologies and scientific knowledge has led individuals to cross national boundaries and live in the socio-heterogeneous networks. The national news and international organizations and enterprises have been emerged giving force to liberalism. Political, social and economic structures have been adjusted, restructured and fluid. The relations between the local and global has changed and delocalized. The situation became difficult for government and the world leaders to oversee and regulate by certain main laws.

Thus, the centralization of authority, power hierarchy and political control have declined and been reshaped. 'Such processes entail the emergence of new identifications, alliances and struggles for space and power within specific areas' (Long 2000). These aspects mentioned reflect also the current issue that reveal the artisanal gold mines in southern-Mali. The Malian government doesn't have power to oversee all active mine. In doing so the actors involved in the field have made up their own rules and regulations.

The phenomenon of globalization has fragmented and reordered power relations between nations, private organizations (NGOs) or others groupings and movements. At the same time, this flow (ongoing socioeconomic transformation) has heavily adjusted and stricken the population lifestyle. The livelihoods and relative living standards remain extremely low and highly vulnerable to economic and political pressure. (Long: 2000,184). In doing so people are undertaking their own strategies to cope with social issues by using interpersonal network, community or neighborhood etc.

According to Long, the emergence of new socio-economics and political groups endowed with conflicts and power are not only struggling against the national state and international institutions but also within and between social groups mobilized on the basis of ethnicity, family and clan affiliation, gender difference and membership of movements focusing upon specific concerns, such as environment conservation, human right and food risks (ibid).

Due to the new social form generated by the globalization, many previous theories focused upon social homogeneity have been outdated or even refuted. Indeed, globalization has generated a whole new diversified pattern, a whole new range of conditions and socio-political responses at national, regional and local levels (2000:188).

To Long, the social change led people to live in a diversified world and it is difficult to identify some uniform 'driving forces' characterized by a homogeneity patterns. The globalization has transformed not only the social value but also other goods, relationships, livelihood activities and forms of knowledge. Hence, in order to analyze these phenomena one should break up the uniformity or homogeneity conception of culture and adopt a theoretical perspective based on heterogeneity and hybridity. He added that despite the flow that has affected different domain and areas of human societies, it doesn't eliminate the socio-cultural ethnic and political diversity.

The analysis from Long can be connected with the conception of Grønhaug (1975) of micro and macro-relations in social organization. When Long is using the concept of "domain" and "arenas" in social analysis on a global and complex level, Grønhaug uses 'social field' to talk about the complexity of social life. For him, a socio-space can have different independent fields interconnected and communicating with each other. It may have an administrative field, a market or economical field and mining field with a variety of levels, for instance, in a small locality. However, all these micro fields are interrelated and connected with the macro field which can be at the state or national level as he quoted in the following:

"Concrete events in a local community's life are at the same time events within macro-systems of social relations by which the more extensive circulation of persons, goods, and symbols occur' (Grønhaug :1975,1).

Both Norman Long and Grønhaug are using actor-oriented approaches when analyzing different social settings. But Long's conception is more related to the currents social issues on both

local and global level of individuals moving through the world, negotiating values and positions and try to find adequate solutions to social problems faced.

3.8.2. Norms and social control theories

In this theoretical part, the conception of Eriksen (1995) and Erving Goffman (1978) on norms and rules in social life have been important for me in order to understand the local rules of conduct established in the gold mine. Eriksen noted that; ‘Every social system requires the existence of rules stating what is permitted and what is not. Such rules, whether they are stated openly or are simply followed by tacit consent, are called norms. They are activated in all fields of life; some are extremely important, whereas others have a marginal importance. A key norm in many society is the rule “You shall not steal” (1995:59).

In people’ everyday interactions, communication rules and norms are stated as social conventions in which transgression can lead to certain punishments or sanctions. According to Eriksen, all social norms are endowed with sanctions that can vary by circumstances. It can be a positive or a negative sanction. The positive sanction involves a reward for following the norms, while the negative one entails punishment for breaking the rules (1995:59). The fact of applying sanctions when people transgress is call the ‘social control’; and the capacity to impose those sanctions to individuals who break the rules also represents a main source of power in all societies, according to Eriksen.

Those typical norms or social conventions mentioned by Eriksen have been stated by the gold mine organizers as well. They have their own prison (jail) to punish or almond (to pay) for reparation for miners who violate norms.

Erving Goffman (1978) shared Eriksen’s concept when he argued that there are social conventions defining everything we do as social creatures. To him, some specific culturally defined norms exist whatever a human is engaged. Our daily conversations and interactions with others are all endowed with rules.

Further, Eriksen analyzed that although those norms reflect the basic values and modes of thought and behavior in society, it doesn’t mean that there is a total agreement on them or total obedience towards them, therefore one cannot expect all members to abide by a strict respect of norms and rules established. And furthermore, he added that those norms and rules in the society

are flexible and negotiable; they can change due to some specific circumstances and the evolution of society as well.

My personal theoretical perspective and analysis are based on the actors oriented approach mentioned by these actors. The concept of social field of Grønhaug (1975) have been used to analyze the social structure of the mine. The actors during their everyday transaction (interaction and exchange) in the mine which has: a management or administration field, an economic or market field, and a person field (cultural, values, identities or ethnic). And all those field are influenced not only by the social conventions (norms and rules) but also by the socio economic and environmental system. I observed that during the actors' transaction (Barth 1981) influenced by those internal and external factors have led to the creation of a new social form. The local cultural and economic lifestyle have been shaken and reshaped. The ethnic boundaries criteria have been renegotiated and restructured. The chance has been given to other ethnic groups members to participate into the social organization and management of the mine.

Chapter 4: Socio-Cultural Organization of the gold mine

In this chapter deal with the administration field. I will present the structure of the gold mine; how the hunters and the Ton-Boloma organize activities and implement rules of conduct, their relationship with the miners and the modern and traditional authorities. Each actor has a specific role in the social setting.

As a guideline, Pritchard said *“The people who live in any society may be unaware, or only dimly aware, that it has a structure. It is the task of the social anthropologist to reveal it”* (Pritchard 1983:5).

4.1. Hunters in the process of the revitalization of a traditional role in a modern social field:

- **From an historical perspective :**

The brotherhood of hunters has dated back a very long time in the southern part of Africa. The creation of many kingdoms and chiefdoms have emerged thank to the hunters’ brotherhood support. It is a voluntary group constituted entirely of men around twenty years or more. The social hierarchy was based on the respect of the gerontocracy. The fighters were collecting taxes of the king from people of different villages that were under his command. There was a strong social cohesion and understanding in the hunter groups as pointed out by the Malian ethnologist (Cisse 1964 :175).

*“Les succès des royaumes animistes qui virent le jour au Soudan après la décadence au XVII^{ème} siècle de l’empire du Mali réside dans le fait que leurs fondateurs et les successeurs de ceux-ci se sont tous appuyés sur les sociétés des chasseurs”*⁷. This is paraphrased to mean that the success of most kings and their successors is due to hunters’ support.

Formerly, the hunters were considered the masters of the forest and traditional healers, because they knew the different trees and their roots which served as medicine to cure illness⁸. They were regarded as guardians of traditions, the gatekeepers of local knowledge and secrets of the society. The brotherhood of hunters was also managed by a head commonly called *“Donso*

7 Youssouf Tata Cissé (1964), Notes sur les sociétés de chasseurs malinké, in Journal de la Société des Africanistes Volume 34 Numéro 2 pp. 175-226.

8 Ibidem, 1964.

*Kun Tigi*⁹ who was always the elder of the group. His role was to initiate the youth hunters about the different processes of hunting, rules and management of the forest. The hunters occupied an important position in the constitution of all kingdoms that emerged in Sudan Francais (Mali, Burkina...). They were considered the soldiers, which means they were responsible for the public security, and protection of the village against enemies (others kingdoms fighters), robbers, criminals, witches and bad devils or spirits. Similarly, hunters provided meat to the village (killing wild animals from the jungle). They were maintaining the security of the king as well. From the eleventh and twelfth centuries, in Mande (Mali), in every village there was a brotherhood of hunters who ensured the security of kingdoms and villages.

So, in an analytical term, they were organizing societies and their powers were linked to the guns and muscles in accordance with traditional rules, norms and social values which were strictly implemented and expected. This brotherhood of hunters existed in all of kingdoms in West Africa, but with the arrival of settlers, these groups had been shaken and some had even disappeared. With the creation of States and delimitation of territorial boundaries, the institutions were established. It is in this logic that the social organization and security were maintained by the public army. The hunters have lost their initial position and control of power. Their roles were henceforth limited to hunt, searching for game (meats) in the forest. The hunters were placed beside but some of them still worked in close collaboration with the national army in many rural areas in Mali.

Nowadays, these groups still exist and occupy an important role in some rural areas that are remote, removed from city centers that are out of oversight of the national army. In all rural areas in Mali, without militaries the 'gaps' are filled by the hunters, especially in the artisanal gold mines.

⁹ Birama SISSOKO (1995), *Les Organisations de Chasseurs du Mali*, Quand le chasseur assure la sécurité publique.



Figure 5: Group of hunters with their traditional dresses and guns

Source : www.google.no/search?q=image+des+chasseurs+du+mali&biw, image des chasseurs du Mali

4.2. Current role of hunters and Ton-Boloma in the gold mine

The hunters and the Ton-Boloma ensure the social control and they inflict penalties in the case of norms violation. In the gold mine of Kemogola, hunters work in close collaboration with the gold mine association members ‘Ton-Boloma’ and the role of these groups are divided into two main aspects: the security level and organizational level.

4.2.1. Security and Rules of conduct

Security and social control are very relevant in every society as the lack of which means chaos and anarchy. As I already mentioned (ref. theory), Eriksen (1995:59) said “Every social system requires the existence of rules stating what is permitted and what is not. Such rules, whether they are stated openly or are simply followed by tacit consent, are called norms. They are activated in all fields of life; some are extremely important, whereas others have a marginal importance”.

In the artisanal gold mine, the hunters and the Ton-Boloma implement rules of conduct and laws and they require a strict respect of these norms. The hunters represent the soldiers of the gold mine; their role is unavoidable for mine security.

The implementation of rules of conduct and norms in the gold mine are complex and it requires a good understanding of the locals' conceptions and interpretation of their natural "societies and beliefs". I mean, we need the cultural background to analyze the relationship between natives and their environment. Certain facts or phenomenon are seen and interpreted by the miners in different ways. Both the Ton-Boloma and hunters, after getting permission from the landowners (traditional authorities), organize a closed meeting and decide together.

Moreover, as a general view it has been mentioned by (Goffman, 1956:473-74) that: 'Rules of conduct impinge upon the individual in two general ways: directly, as obligations, establishing how he is morally constrained to conduct himself; indirectly, as expectations, establishing how others are morally bound to act in regard to him'.

The principles and regulations of the gold mine are implemented with similar obligations and expectations:

- As a first rule: before someone can get access to land all miners (teams) are supposed to pay the starting fee or '*datige wari*'. Without paying this amount of money, no one is authorized to start digging. This fee varies sometimes between three thousand (3000 Fcfa, € 4.59) or (five thousand 5000 Fcfa, € 7.64). The payment of this fee is the main condition to get a plot.
- Second rule: it is a tradition that all miners are allowed to work every day except Monday. For the natives, the gold mine also needs some break or rest. This day is commonly called '***Kebe***' and all miners stay homes. Every Monday, hunters control different pits and if they catch someone working, he will pay an almond, which varies. The accused may be asked to provide a goat and cola or money.
- Third rule: it is strictly forbidden to cut the leg of the mine pits, or to cut the mud of others diggers under the ground, (diggers who are behind or are not reached the ore yet). This practice is considered stealing. These persons can be expelled from the mine site or force to stop digging their mine pit. They call it "*niekoro tige or Niekoro-dun*". The cutting of the legs is very dangerous and it leads to the collapsing of the mine pits.
- Fourth rule: it is not allowed to mine during the night. Every night, the hunters come with torches (light) and guns to keep this control.

- Fifth rule: if a mine collapses, all activities should be stopped, until the victim is dug up, identified and buried (if he has died). After the burial, all miners return home because it is not permitted to work during the rest of the same day.

- Sixth rule: it is not allowed to pronounce the name of a well '*Kolon*'. Because the mine pit and the well have the same characteristic and dimension but they are not for the same goal or usage. There is not total agreement about this rule, it depends on miners' different cultural understanding. But Niagale Bayayogo¹⁰ told me that:

“The gold belongs to the devils and if one continues to pronounce the name of well, the devils of the mine pit will get angry and they will hide the gold and then the diggers will see only water from this pit”.

I realized that many miners don't like to talk about this and most of them are wary of pronouncing the name of the well in the gold mine. But this rule is not strict and there is no punishment if someone does it. For my analysis, it seems to be a social convention just to avoid it. It is also a belief system associated with gold mining among these people.

- The others rules are common to the normal law, like robberies, stealing of gold or money, murders...the transgression of these rules may have a heavy punishment from the hunters (imprisonment or elimination of the said person in secret). These hunters also own a prison in the gold mine just for robbers or criminals¹¹.

In the gold mine of Kemogola there are more than one hundred (100) hunters, who are in charge of the mine security, but the same hunters are mining as well. If some problems happen, conflict or misunderstanding between miners, the hunters and Ton-Boloma convoke them and they try to solve it all together. When the mine collapses on someone, both of them intervene in order to find and dig up the dead from the pit.

Furthermore, these groups have power and they play an intermediate role between miners and the landowners and between miners themselves.

¹⁰Fieldwork, Niagale Bagayogo is a wife native of Kemogola village, she was the owner of the pit or Dama muso, pulling the rope and washing the mud.

¹¹ During my stay in the gold mine of Kemogola, I didn't notice any criminal case.

Their main role is to oversee the gold mine, taking control in order to avoid thefts, conflict robberies, and other transgressions of their local restored rules and social norms.

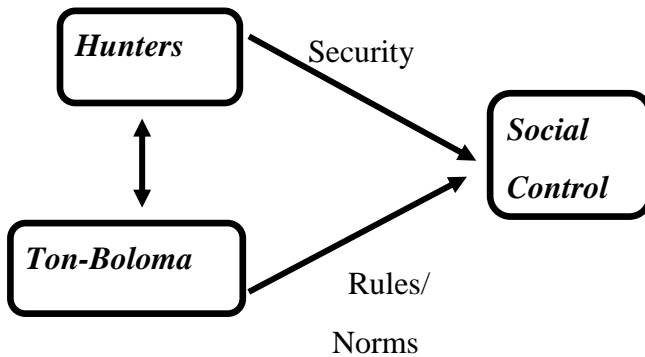


Figure 6: Model of social control in the mine area showing how the hunters and the Ton-Boloma co-act to effect that.

4.2.2. Social organization of the gold mine

The social organization is maintained by the hunters and the Ton-Boloma. For instance, when getting authorization from both landowners and the municipality, the hunters and Ton-Boloma members arrive at the location and peg different plots. In the gold mine, after the pegging processes, the members of these two groups have the priority to choose first the best places that is believed to have more gold.

The Head of Ton-Boloma, Yacouba Bagayogo, writes down the names of all Ton-Boloma members and hunters on small papers and they put it on a stick on these chosen plots as a sign, and therefore no other miners are permitted to touch or starting digging this plot.

The next day, they give authorization to the rest of the miners to choose the rest of the plots that they want and start digging (except for the plots with a sign because these plots are extremely reserved for the leaders).

Sometimes, the gold mine organizers get into conflicts, but most of these disputes are about mine plots and other personal interests. They are all working together in order to keep up the good organization of the gold mine.

- I observed that, the Ton-Boloma and the hunters are performing the same role like pegging and distribution of mine plots to miners and they are both maintaining the mine safety in the daytime.

The only difference between the two groups is that the hunters can use force if someone refuses to respect the norms. In addition, the hunters come and check the mine every Monday which is considered the holiday (see second rule), and during the nights in order to avoid night digging and stealing of workers' materials.

4.3. The gold mine association “Ton-Boloma”

The functioning of the gold mine association (Ton-Boloma) has been set up specially to maintain the good organization of the gold mine. The group consists of more than thirty persons (men). Sometimes they wear a uniform. The main role of this group after pegging different plots is to collect the starting fee which costs three thousand (3000 CFA, 4.57 €) per each pit. This amount of money is collected and given to Yacouba Yagayogo who is the head of ‘Ton-Boloma this money will be divided according to some criteria between the landowners, the municipality, and the two groups.

Unlike the hunters' group, in which the social hierarchy is based on gerontocracy, the management of the Ton-Boloma reveals some specific criteria that are more subjective and personal.

4.4. Statuses/roles and Power management in the gold mine: Two case studies

‘For it is clear that social conventions, role expectations and the very distribution of roles and statuses in society contribute to systematic differences in power. Some actors are able to exert considerable power over others; some have very limited control of their own lives, let alone other people’s’ (Eriksen 1995:53).

While some laws concerning the mine management take origin in the customary tradition and in the legal Malian's code, much is revealed from the mere desires and wills of the leaders. The gold mine social system seems to be a battlefield where the motivation and willingness of the strongest seems to be the law.

4.4.1. Sekou Bagayogo as the Head of hunters

In the gold mine of Kemogola Sekou Bagayogo is the Head of hunters called “*Donso kun tigi*”. He is sixty-six years old and native of Kemogola village. The social hierarchy is elaborated according to the gerontocracy ‘elderhood’. Sekou benefits from the status of an elder, and enjoys

great respect from youngsters and he is the most consulted person in the group. During the meeting he is the first to take the floor and introduces the problem and is the last to conclude. The ‘*Donso kun tigi*’ has more immunities than others, mostly when it comes to making decisions. In this group, he occupies the highest status. The head of hunters is supposed also to be wise and the most powerful person, in terms of life experience and the holder of traditional knowledges (secret, magic...). The main role of Sekou is to give advice to other hunters, he is old and he doesn’t participate much in different activities but he still has more consideration and power when it comes to making decision.

4.4.2. Yacouba Bagayogo, as a leader

Yacouba is around fifty years, considered the ‘Ton-Boloma Kun tigi’, and he is the “Big man”¹² of the gold mine of Kemogola. Yacouba is not the elder but he is the leader of the gold mine association. As I have been informed by certain persons of the group (my main informant Yacouba Coulibaly and his friend Souleymane Bagayogo), he is occupying this status because he is a native of Kemogola and he is landowner as well.

Furthermore, he is from the same lineage of the head of the village. Yacouba is a charismatic and a well-known person, not only in the gold mine but also in the community, and he has more than twenty years of mining experience.

In addition, he is the richest person of the group because he earns more money and he finances different pits of miners (financier). These relationships offer him a certain power and legitimacy to occupy a strong position and dominate other members of the group. As a chief of the Ton-Boloma, he benefits by having more privileges and sometimes he can make some unilateral decisions without any meetings with others. I realized that he is dynamic and the most influential person of the gold mine.

¹² I mean, he is the most influential and powerful person in the gold mine.



Source: Coulibaly O. Fieldwork in Kemogola, 21/06/2016

Figure 7: Yacouba Bagayogo, drawing the map of the gold mine and explaining the rules of conducts.

Moreover, Yacouba is very strict and he doesn't like to share his role and status of "*chief*" or "*Ton-kun tigi*" with others. The majority of the members are natives of Kemogola (brothers and from the same ethnic group) and the rest of members of the group are Yacouba's friends from others villages or cities. The group is not opened for anybody; before a person can become a member, the person should contact the leader first and have some exchanges with him. Being from another culture and ethnic group, one needs to interact with the leaders before he is enrolled in the group. They need to establish and share certain principles. This situation reflected Barth's analysis of ethnic groups and boundaries when he mentioned:

'...a dichotomization of others as strangers or as members of another ethnic group, implies a recognition of limitations on shared understandings, differences in criteria for judgment of value and performance, and restriction of interaction to sectors of assumed common understanding and mutual interest' (Barth 1981:204).

When an outsider contacts the Ton-Boloma, they try to identify the person according to some internal criteria. In this local group, the natives of Kemogola “Bagayogo” are privileged by the leader and they have more priorities to become a member, because the land belongs to them.

From my own analysis of the Ton-Boloma, and the whole organization of the gold mine, I realized that, due to Yacouba's kinship and landownership relations plus his identity of being a native of Kemogola, he is a suitable person to occupy the highest status in the group. So, land ownership has perpetuated and endorsed Yacouba's power to dominate others.

Further, when I analyzed the social system of the community, I found that power and hunting incarnated male identity. There is a complete domination of males upon females; men have the control of power and they make all decisions regarding the management of the gold mine. Women are put aside; in all these two groups, no woman is associated with the mine management.

4.5. Landowners/traditional authorities

Kemogola inhabitants are landowners; this land belongs to their ancestors and grandparents who were the first to inhabit this area, build up the first concession and create farms. It was a farming community before the discovery of gold. The village itself is managed by a Head and his advisers. Those traditional authorities are making all decision related to the land management. Most of them are older people and they have to give their agreement before the miners get access to land. Once they are in agreement with each other to make their land available for miners, they inform the municipality. And then, the Ton-Boloma, hunters and the accounting officer from the municipality meet them at the place and peg. After, they collect money from miners from each pit. The amount fee will be shared and the landowners will get it in part.

As an analysis, I observed that the system of the land management related to the gold mine is a bit complex. In fact, the landowners, the Ton-Boloma and hunters are the same persons from the same family (Extended or large-family) and the same village. But they are constituted in different groups within the organization of the gold mine.

The relationship between landowners are docile and soft, based on fathers and sons' relationships (Kindship system Radcliffe-Brown 1952). The elderly people (fathers) stay home and give instructions to their 'sons' represented in the gold mine as Ton-Boloma and Hunters, but at the same time they are performing in the gold mine as some independent groups. However, they

associated a few people from other villages in order to maintain the security and well-organized activities.

4.6. The municipality/modern authority

The local administration is also involved in the gold mine management. The municipality works with the Ton-Boloma who is in charge of collecting money from the miners. The Accounting Officer of the municipality, taxes around 33% (1000 CFA, 1.53€) of the three thousand (3000 CFA, 4.57 €) taken from each mine pit. One can say the miners also pay also taxes. The rest of the money is divided in three different parts; the landowners take a part, the head of the village will get a bit and the rest goes to the hunters and the Ton-boloma. In the commune of Syentoula, there are three different gold mine sites (Lena, Dossola and Kemogola) and the municipality taxes all of them. Another role of the bureaucrats is that if there is a conflict in the gold mine which exceeds the capacity of the Ton-Boloma, both the municipality and the landowners can be called and they will try to discuss and find a solution.

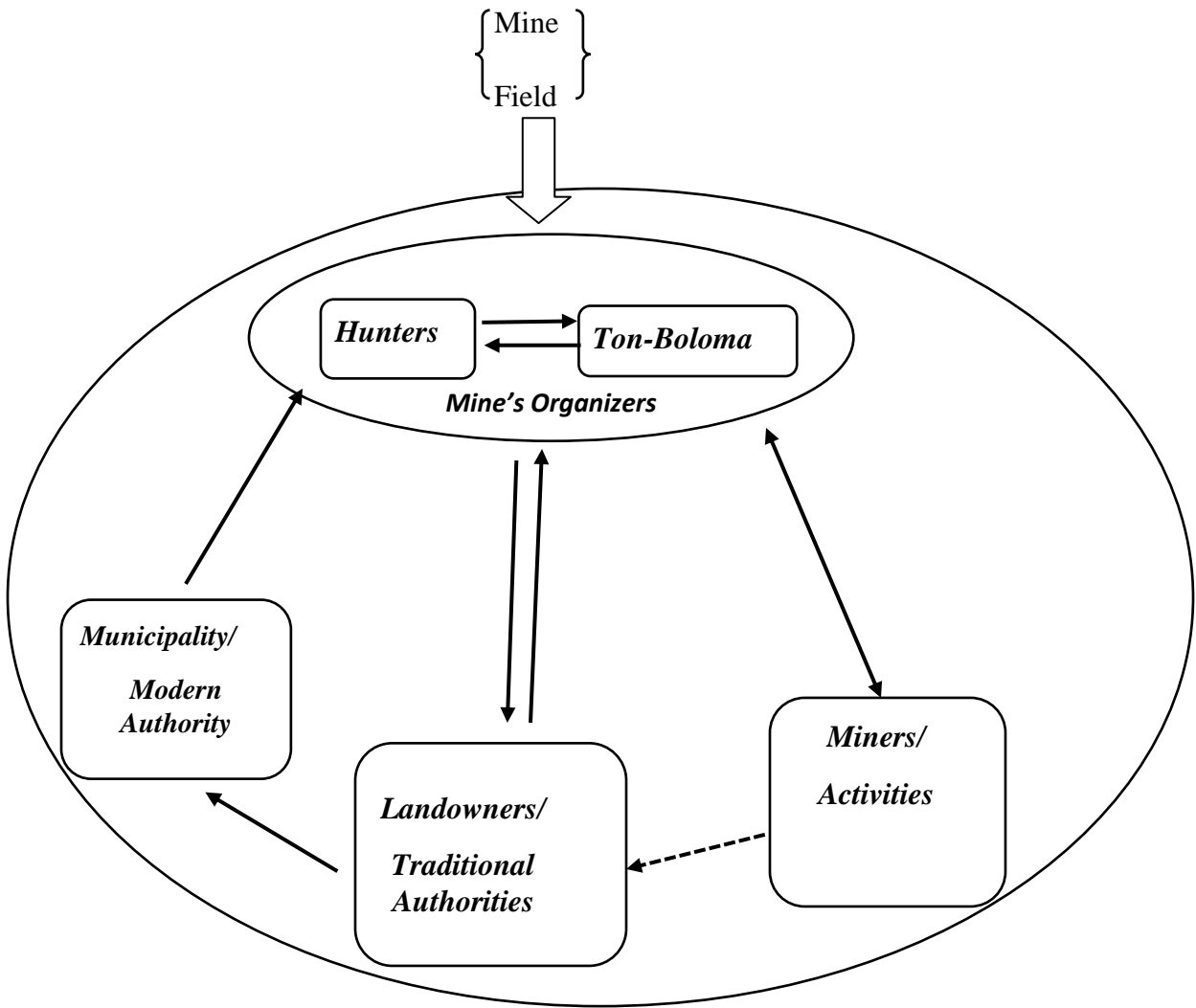
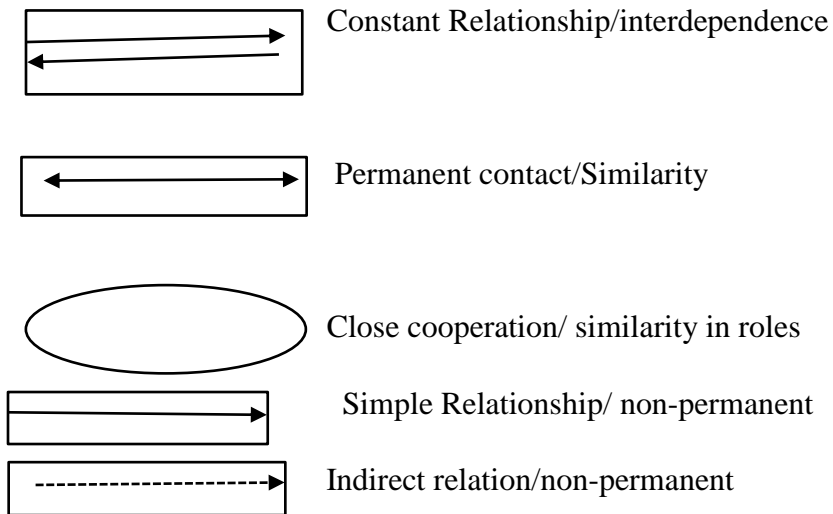


Figure 8: Social interaction network of the gold mine of Kemogola.



Chapter 5: Mining Activities

5.1. Formation of working teams and Sacrifices

5.1.1. Working teams and the integration of newcomers

This is the first and the most important step of the mining process. After the distribution of mine plots by the Ton-Boloma, the miners form different working teams. The formation of teams requires certain rules and agreements. The criteria for the establishment of the teams vary from group to group. But usually, the persons who share the same identity or share the same cultural background always work together as a team. It is common for miners who come from the same country, village or community to join the same team. For example, I noticed during my research that the Dogon (ethnic group Northern Mali) and Fulani were always on a team and furthermore, they were always speaking their mother tongue (language). That means identity, cultural and territorial borders are key factors when setting a working team in the gold mine.

Similarly, friendship relation and personal mining skills are also some important criteria that explain the case of Yacouba Coulibaly, my main informant. He always makes a team with the natives (landowners). In the selection criteria of a working team, one realizes that the lazy ones are always avoided. The energetic persons or hard workers called '*Barakela*' are more solicited and expected by everyone.

In general, the formation of different working teams is a voluntary choice and each group consists of four or five persons including one wife. Some of these teams keep working together and can last for long time unlike other groups who disintegrate when they fight. In this case, the different belligerents seek for other partners and set up a new team. This phenomenon is very frequent in the gold mine.

I noticed that, if the same team exploits two or three mine pits and don't get any gold, they often get frustrated. Whenever this happens, they try to accuse each other saying that an unlucky person is among the group.

Furthermore, the integration of newcomers is not difficult. Because usually youngsters join the gold by group from the same village or community (friend). When they arrive, they just contact the Ton-Boloma in order to pay the starting fee and get access to land. More so, thanks to the social system, the funders (financiers) also are always there to finance people who don't have money to start on their own. So, they will get in contact with a funder who will provide them the necessary resources to exploit the pit. But if a newcomer comes alone, and he doesn't have any relationship (comrade or friend) in the gold mine and starts looking for job, he may get some help from a team. The team will ask him to join and be paid per day according to the number of buckets that he has pulled out or dug out. This is the miner's social solitary system. The newcomers don't struggle a lot for their integration because every day a wave of people are arriving in the gold mine, and most of their newcomers have some former friends or co-villagers in the gold mine, so they easily find someone or a team who will integrate them.

5.1.2. Sacrifices

Beliefs occupy also an important space in West Africa's social universe, particularly in Mali and especially when it comes to testing out luck. These religious practices are very common in artisanal gold mines. After forming the working team, the members make some sacrifices. The main goal of these ritual practices is to assure success in the search for gold and to seek protection against accident and risk like the collapsing of mine pits and others. In doing so, the miners bring chicken, dogs and goats to fetishists who slit the animals and shed their blood on the fetishes or idols. The main goal of this sacrifice is to offer some gifts to the fetishes and these persons will be rewarded by giving them more gold and protection.

After completing these ritual practices, they return to the gold mine to begin their activities.

I noticed that many miners also recited incantations and the Muslims recited some surahs from the Qur'an before to get in the pit. Other sacrifices, such as giving cola (usually white and red cola) to old men or women are very common.

For ethical reasons (afraid to be exposed) I was not allowed to film some of these practices, because many miners are Muslim and they believe in God (Allah) and the Prophet Mohamed (SAW) as a messenger of Allah, but they continue to consult fetishists when they face problems, and these practices are strictly prohibited in Islamic according to Sunnites or Wahhabism principles. Another

reason I was prevented from getting access was distance, because most of these fetishists and geomancers are living far away from the gold mine; some live in Kemogola village and others live in neighboring communities.

5.2. Digging pits and working underground with pick-axes

The artisanal gold extraction requires mutual assistance between co-workers. Without collectivity, one person can't achieve anything in the gold mine.

In the gold mine, usually 70% of miners have no money to finance themselves. So, after choosing the plot, the team tries to find a funder who will finance the pit. The financier will provide food, tea, water etc. to the team. The 'Financier' supports the team until the pit reaches the first ore of gold, and then the funding stops. The mine pit itself takes over the team.

Among the members of the team, there are two persons who are considered the owners in which their role is just to dig vertically in the pit. When reaching the minerals, they leave it, and then the second two diggers climb in with pick axes and dig horizontally until they finish digging up all the ores. They are called by the natives "*chifuru*" or "*Kaladjan tigiw*". These persons have more stamina as this step demands more physical effort. The underground work is very hard and these workers are dealing with more risk and danger hence, this step requires more experience and a great carefulness.

When men are digging pits, the women and young girls pull the rope with the bucket.

Sometimes, when it gets very hot inside the pit (high temperature), there are other people who own some air-cooling machines to blow air inside the pit in order to cool it down. At the same time, the members of the team will call other young boys to dig a small pool near the pit and fill with water which will be used by the women for washing out the ores.

In the mining processes, the underground diggers have the control and more power than their co-workers, and they get more money as well when it comes to sharing mining income. They are also considered the leaders of the team.

5.3. Social solidarity

Mutual aid is very frequent in artisanal gold mines. Knowing that miners are just testing their luck, if a mine pit of one's team is getting more gold they try also to help other co-teams who are not finding any gold. This system is called '*bololabi or bi*', and through this system, the team can give a chance to a member from another team to climb into the pit and dig some ores for one or two hours, and it is the same for the women too. A woman from another team can come and pull the rope for another team. As a salary or system of reward, when the man is digging and the woman is pulling the rope, the wife pulls nine buckets of ores and takes the tenth. When they manage to dig, and pull thirty buckets of ores, they will get three buckets of ores. After this, the man and the woman carry this mud down to the river, wash out and share the income. After that, the team owner of the pit continues their normal work.

5.4. Washing /panning step

After digging up the mud, usually women wash them in the small pool or some even prefer to transport it on their heads into the river and wash for gold. These women possess calabashes and pans. When washing mud in order to facilitate the process, women mix some soap in the water which can help them to separate gold from unwanted gangue materials. Some women even use mercury to make it easier if the ore is very hard (stones). The circular shaking of ore and water in the pan causes the gold to settle to the bottom of the pan.

They try to find the gold after many times of panning the same mud. Both women and children are involved in this washing process. I realized that some of these children have been recommended by their mother to help in the washing in order to increase their family income. They wash all the mud from the pit and put the gold together. In the afternoon, they bring it to the local market and sell.

In the gold mine there is largely gender division of work. Whereas digging and working underground is considered 'men's work', washing and panning ore is reserved for women and girls.



Figure 9: Women, washing out for gold.

5.5. Role of Blacksmiths



Figure 10: The smith is making a new pick-axe

In the mine pit, I realize also the presence of some blacksmiths. In Mali, blacksmiths are castes. Initially their role was just to beg their masters in order to get some cereals. But today many of them have abandoned this former status and are manufacturing different farming and gold mining materials.

In the mine site of Kemogola, the blacksmiths are there to fix the broken pick-axes, make some new materials and to sell them to the miners.

5.6. Collapsing of mines' pits and its socio-cultural interpretation

Accidents and pits collapsing are very frequent in the artisanal gold mines, because the majority of miners have no experience or skills in gold extraction, and many miners are victims of the running system. By doing this activity, their everyday lives are exposed to all sort of danger and risk (diseases and death).

When the mines collapse, the underground diggers are usually the victims.

In the gold mine, accidents and the collapsing of mines pits raise a lot of interpretation from workers as I have noticed and experienced, whenever it happens.

-For some miners, maybe the victim (person) does not make the regular sacrifices before getting inside the pit, which they believe can provoke the mine collapsing. According to certain workers, the gold belongs to devils and they also need to be offered sacrifices.

- From others' perceptions, if the pit collapses and kills someone, it means this person did something wrong. This happens when a person steals gold somewhere or when he cheats with his co-workers. For instance, when a digger discovers a piece of gold inside the pit and hides it from others.

But from my own observations and analysis, which are like certain miners' views as well; mine pits collapsing is due to:

-Miners' temerities and drug use: by temerity, there are some workers who don't like to start a new pit, they always try to rework old mine pits which have been already exploited and left one month or two week ago and the legs of these pit are almost tired or weak. When other diggers just touch them, the pit can fall down. These persons are called "*furu baralaw*".

In addition, if they use drugs to increase their strength and stamina, they lose their consciences, and then they can cut the legs which are supporting the mine pit without being aware.

- Moreover the miners have no electronic machines to control the content or quality of the land if it can support more pits or not. That is, if the land is too soft, the mine pit can collapse at any time as well.

This mine collapsed on 5th of May 2016 and killed an inhabitant from Ouroun.



Source: *Coulibaly O. Fieldwork in Kemogola, 29/05/2016*

Figure 11: *The collapsing mine pit closed with sign of woe (tree leaves).*

If a mine pit collapses and kills, the Ton-Boloma and hunters close this pit with wood and tree leaves as a sign and then nobody is allowed to touch this pit anymore.

In the gold mine of Kemogola this sign on a pit can signify two meanings for the miners;

-The first, when the mine collapses and someone is killed, it is closed by the Ton-Boloma after digging up the dead, and then covered wood and tree leaves as a sign of woe or a sad event. This sign is not only use by the miners, in some areas in Mali if a dangerous traffic accident happens (dead), people do the same on the road for two or three days after which they remove it. The same

happens if someone died; after burying him people usually cover the grave with tree leaves (especially in rural areas).

-The second meaning is that, it signifies that the team fought and injured themselves, or that they violated the mine's law by cutting the pits' legs, then the mine can be closed. In this simple case (just fight or violation of rules), the Ton-Boloma can just close the pit with wood and they will not cover with tree leaves.

In sum of analysis of the chapter 4 and 5, I realized that the social organization and mining activities were well-organized between miners and it followed a certain process.

First, I observed that, the formation of all these different groups, namely, the Ton-Boloma, hunters and working teams were based as I mentioned above on (friendship, kindship, ethnicity relationship...). These aspects can be related not only to the kinship system and ethnicity theories introduced by Radcliffe-Brown (1952) and Frederik Barth (1981), but it reflects also the local and global theory developed by Norman Long. Because, despite the relatives' relations and ethnic identity that existed within these different groups, the conflicts were very frequent. The gold mine is a multi-cultural space, people came from different areas, with their own social problems. Arriving in the mine they formed a new social universe, endowed with norms, conflict, power in pursuing their personal interests. This reflects Long view's in the local and global transformation when he argued:

'In the face of this, new forms of conflict and alliance have emerged, involving not only struggles against the national state and international institutions, but also within and between social groups mobilized on the basis of ethnicity, family and clan affiliation, gender difference, and membership of movements focusing upon specific concerns, such as environmental conservation, human rights and food risks'. (Long 2000:184).

Chapter 6: Motivation of people and the everyday life of miners in the gold mine

6.1. Attraction of urban and rural population to artisanal gold mines: Case of four miners (Yacouba Coulibaly, Niagale Bagayogo, Youssef Keita and Ouedrago):

The miners have dreams and ambitions and the gold mine is perceived for them as the only place where it seems very easy to make quick profit and achieve their wants. Indeed, the climate change characterized by drought which is shaking the local farmers' livelihood remains one of the main reasons of their motivation to mining. In addition to that natural constraint, during my investigation process I came up with others findings. I realized that, miners have many reasons and speak with many voices, 'polyvocality' (Clifford and Marcus 1986:15). They have different motivations that lead them to join the gold mine. Some of these motivations are more and less objective. In doing so, with my main informant Yacouba Coulibaly, I engaged in a dialogue with some of my informants in order to know more about the attractiveness for both urban and rural populations to artisanal mines.

- Yacouba Coulibaly

Yacouba Coulibaly is a local peasant living in Syentoula village. According to him, his motivation for mining is due to the mismanagement of the State in the agriculture sector which is unable to provide good fertilizer and insecticides to farmers. In addition, land shortage in the village and poor rainfall combined with drought are some vital reasons that encourage Yacouba to undertake mining activities.

Through my analysis, I noticed that, mining is an alternative way for Yacouba to meet his family's expectations. The incomes from the gold mine are used not only to support his family but also to buy farming supplies (the plough, hoe, herbicides...).

Today, Yacouba is more interested in mining than farming and he wants to leave farming, according to his sons Madou and Lassina. Further, I realized that the case of Yacouba is general for most of the peasants who are working in the artisanal gold mine. When the raining season

starts, many of them refuse to go back or certainly come very late to the farms. The dream of 'quick wealth' seems to be a common idea in many peasants' minds. That is if one is lucky it is very easy to get more money from the gold mine in a very short time than in farming.

In addition, other socio-cultural factors such as the competition and rivalry between natives explains the local peasants' attraction to artisanal gold mining. The motorcycle is perceived not only as a means of fast transportation but also as a luxury means for the young generation of this community. Regarding the male personhood and identity in the rural commune of Syentoula; the most valorous male is someone who owns a motorbike (Sanili, Sanya...). The one who has "a motorbike" and a lot of money is lusted by everyone therefore, the competition is very tight in the gold mine between different teams.

Nowadays in this community, farming which was the most dominant activity¹³ with 98% is gradually being replaced with mining, and men, women and children are now actively involved in mining activities.

¹³ Monographie Sommaire de la Commune, Direction Régionale du Plan et de la Statistique 2015.

- **Niagale Bagayogo:**



Source: Coulibaly O. Fieldwork in Kemogola, 27/05/2016

Figure 12: Niagale Bagayogo after pulling the rope, sits down and to take some rest.

Niagale is a wife, mother of three children and is a native of Kemogola (landowners) and has five years of mining experience. In the gold mine, she pulls the rope among their team (removes the mud from the pit with the bucket) and washes for gold as well. The involvement of Niagale in mining activities is due to certain socio-cultural factors. In the same way as their husbands after farming activities, in Kemogola women also join the gold mine and work alongside the men.

According to her, farming income cannot cover all the family needs. Niagale is doing this job so as to support herself in household expenditures by buying soaps and clothes for children, paying their schooling fee and condiment fees for cooking. In this community men don't contribute a lot in these different family expenditures. For Niagale a female contribution to support the family is compulsory, because it is perceived as a tradition.

Usually in rural areas in Mali, women occupy an important role in household sustainability: they assist men in order to meet families' expectations. In Malian culture in general and particularly in this local community, female identity and value is evaluated according to her ability to contribute into household sustainability and submission to her husband. It is for instance widely assumed in Mali that Dogon, Minianka, and Bambara wives work a lot for their husbands.

Moreover, it is a mandatory tradition for all women to buy or provide loincloths and cooking utensils for their daughters when they get married. It is an act of dishonor and social humiliation for all women in the society who have not been able to provide these items for their daughters before they move into their husbands' homes (*patrilocal or virilocal residence*) because a daughter represents the personhood of her mother in the society. It is the same if a girl is lazy; it becomes difficult for her to get a husband.

When analyzing the social phenomenon, I knew that the social expectation and representation of females are taken into account when explaining the attraction and intensive work of women not only in artisanal gold mine but also in other domains of social life in the Kemogola community.

- **Ouedrago**

Ouedrago is around 17 years old and a local farmer from Burkina Faso. His motivation to go to the mine is due to personal ambition. His main dream was always to buy a motorbike (Sanya).

Ouedrago reported that:

'I come to the gold mine, because I want to buy a motorbike this year (...) I am a shepherd and we have a lot of animals and farms in our family in Burkina. But I like mining because it is an easy way for us to get money quickly'.

I observed that in most of the countries youngsters who are working, the artisanal gold mine of Kemogola are lured to this dream. Their attraction is not due to other social problems but they join the gold mine because it is perceived as a place where they can succeed and realize their dreams. Most of these youngsters migrated from Burkina Faso to Mali and their main ambition is to mine and buy motorbikes which is perceived in their culture as a means of luxury and is very comfortable for transport.



Source: Coulibaly O. Fieldwork Kemogola /06/2016

Figure 13: Youngsters from Burkina Faso whose desires are to buy motorbikes.

- Youssouf Keita

The last is a Guinean immigrant, Youssouf who is around 48 years. He is a very talented, well-known miner who used to work in many southern Malian artisanal gold mines, and he has over thirty-six (36) years of mining experience on his own. Contrary to all the other informants, mining is Youssouf's main job or "*métier*" in which he has inherited from his family in Guinea Conakry. He started mining with his father at a very early age. Youssouf is a husband and father of five children that he has left back home and immigrated to the gold mine. For him mining is an important activity that help him a lot in life, not due to poverty. Youssouf has never carried out another job in his life. He used to pull the rope as a youth alongside his father in Quinea Conakry where he learned the different techniques of digging as well. Nowadays he is an underground digger and is very proud of himself being a gold miner called "[Klano".

The miners that are not doing another job are called “*Klano*” by the natives and these miners can spend some years without going home, and they are permanently resident in the mine’s hamlet.



Source: Coulibaly O. Fieldwork Kemogola /06/2016

Figure 14: Youssouf Keita explaining his motivation to mining as a main job.

Through the description of these different personal motivations and experiences, I realized that miners’ motivations compared to mine are linked to many socio-cultural and economic reasons which vary from individual to individual.

In sum, the miner’s attraction to the artisanal gold mine are due to: poverty, personal dreams, social and family expectations, climate change and drought in relation to certain local peasants’ cases.

6.2. The everyday life in the gold mine: Coping with incertitude and risk

The everyday life of miners in the mine are saddled with a lot challenges, expectations, risks and hopelessness.

As I mentioned earlier, miners join the gold mine carrying with them the idea of making quick profit in order to realize their dreams and meet their social and family expectations but unfortunately those initial dreams, for the majority of them, resulted in definite disappointment and unsuccessfulness. A lot of gold miners' ambitions are never met. This situation breaks their everyday projections thereby increasing hopelessness.

Having no scientific or technology tools to check for gold, the miners throw themselves into chance looking for gold, digging thousands of pits, pulling tons of mud with buckets, spending hours, weeks and months working underground, doing a very hard job coping with accidents, risks, hunger, injury, death and collapsing of pits and at the end are without any profit. During my conversation with some of them I realized that more than 85 to 90 percent of workers are living in hopelessness, some of them rather than searching to achieve their dreams, have to turn looking for survival. A few miners can eat three times in a day. Hunger and famine are common and popular in the gold mine of Kemogola especially. Today, the gold miners are struggling for livelihood in their everyday life, and the majority of them are uncertain. In this local community mining is the only alternative way for farmers to support themselves in order to manage their family, especially in this time where agricultural activities are badly affected due to the climate change which leads to a series of seasonal drought.

A local farmer who immigrated to the artisanal gold mine Bakary Bagayogo¹⁴ commented upon their situation:

“We came here to mine just for three or four months, after which we will go back to our farms. In the gold mine, if one is lucky, it is very easy to obtain a quicker profit than farming (...) we gain less from farming and this income is not enough for us... The most difficult thing about mining activities is that our hopes (dreams) have never been reached. We earn very less in the gold mine also. If we get money we will go back home, however if one doesn't gain it is very difficult to go back with empty hands, it's a shame in the home community because we promised the family that we will bring something. Now if you don't earn, you have to stay forever until you get money”.

In addition, I observed that the rivalry between comrades and friends is another factor that encourage some workers to stay in the gold mine, because if they come from the same community and if

¹⁴ Bakary is He is a local farmer from a neighboring village of Kemogola,.

one or two youngsters get money, the others colleagues also will not go back home without gaining. In this case, they are ready to stay or to migrate to another gold mine. I realized that some miners have lost their family contacts.

Those miners have some expectations and obligations to their homes and families, and so they are afraid of the social humiliation. Many workers prefer to stay and live in very tough conditions in the gold mine.

Chapter 7: Socio-economic impact and environmental consequences of mining on the local livelihood

7.1. The local buyers and Gold trade

In this part I limited my research only to the micro-economic level of gold selling. After panning and extracting the gold, we come to its economic process in the local market.

A small local fair has been set up specifically by the miners in Kemogola. The fair is located near the gold mine in the forest, and there are camps for the gold buyers under the small sheds ‘hangar’ with some appropriate balances for weighing gold. Those local gold buyers are commonly called “businessmen” by the natives. The market is populated only in the morning and during the afternoon.

At this place, a lot of activities go on. We have some mechanics for fixing bikes and motorcycles; there are also some women who sell foods, others have even set up some kiosks to sell telephones, credit, clothes and many others things. When the miners come from their residences (hamlets or villages) they eat their breakfast at the fair before they join the gold mine. Women, after washing for gold, take it to the market in the afternoon.

Basically, selling of gold starts from the smallest which is (0.01gram of gold) and costs five hundred Franc CFA (500 F; € 0,75), and the second is 0.1gram which costs two thousand (2000 CFA, € 7.80), one gram costs (20000F, € 30.48) and so forth. After exchanging, the cash is brought and shared between the team’s members according to their own criteria.

Siriman Coulibaly, a local gold buyers camped at the local fair of the gold mine said this:

‘We are retail buyers, we buy gold from the local miners, and we transport it to Bamako (Capital of Mali) and resell it to the wholesalers merchants who in turn bring it to the foreign customers represented in Bamako, and finally these customers will bring it to Europe or other Western countries and sell the gold to their highest representatives for industrial transformation’.

I realized that a few miners and gold buyers also prefer to bring some gold pieces in Bamako to the big market so-called "Artisanat" where there are a lot of jewelers (handcrafts) who also transform it into bracelets and jewelry. From my personal cultural background, in Mali, many

people use gold as dowries for their daughters when they are getting married and this is a tradition in many Malian communities that a woman should bring a small fortune when her husband will face some family issues; it is a duty for the wife to support him.

In general, one realized that much of the gold from Malian artisanal mines is bought by the local traders who supply middle men and trading houses in Bamako. These small traders buy with a low price from the mine and when they transport it to Bamako the price is increased. Hence, the gold buyers are becoming more and more rich and the local miners remain in extreme poverty.

7.2. The impact of mining on the local livelihood

7.2.1. The impact of mining of the local farming system

- **Yacouba switching between mining and farming**

The livelihood condition has dramatically changed due to a successive few years of drought; farming can no longer help Yacouba to meet his responsibility of Head of family and the same time buy the farming ingredients and other materials. In order to overcome these livelihood challenges during the dry season until to the mid of raining season, Yacouba undertakes the artisanal gold mining. Therefore, this position of Yacouba is not appreciated by his sons.

During my short stay in his family, I shared the same room with his two sons Madou and Lassina Coulibaly. They don't go to the gold mine and stay on the farm. When I followed them over there, I realized that they were complaining a lot about their father's profession. According to Madou, the first son, his father should not go to the gold mine because farming activity is too challenging. It was quite difficult for them to manage the farms alone. For him, mining is not profitable and Yacouba was working very hard without getting any money that can help them in the family.

Moreover, Madou added that, when his father came back home, he sells the cereals in order to buy his own needs (tea and cigarette for smoking). Being a son, he cannot prevent him from doing that. The situation is too stressful for these sons and they are struggling to find a way in order to convince their father to join them on the farm. When the rains start, Madou and Lassina stay in doubt, because they don't know where they should start to plough or to sow different seeds. I noticed that Madou was not happy at all and he wants his father to stop with mining.

I observed a similar thing with the second son, Lassina. He complained that when his father works hard in the gold mine, during the raining season he cannot do a lot on the farm. Hence when the two young boys don't manage to handle the farm, the incomes won't be enough; this leads to starvation in the family.

Every day, the two children were struggling on the farm, planting fertilizers and collecting stems and leaves to keep the farm safe before the rainy season.

When the rainy season arrives, Yacouba reduces working at the gold mining a bit and joins the children at the farm. With his sons, they cultivate some millet, corn, cotton bean, and peanut. Yacouba owns some bullocks with which they use to plough the farm and all together, the members of family try to manage the farm.

7.2.2. Socio cultural impact of mining on the local lifestyle:

The cultural mixture of different ethnic groups is creating assimilation in Kemogola and in neighboring villages. The combination of urban and rural lifestyles produces some cultural clashes and conflicts in the gold mine. The contact with others (way of living) has influenced most of the natives' lifestyle, and it is characterized by assimilation and acculturation on both sides.

In fact, many urban and rural workers left their wives and children in their homes and migrated completely to the gold mine forever. In the gold mine of Kemogola, these miners stay in the hamlet (shelters) and some of them get married with others wives, because there are some women and girls who have also left their husbands and children and join the gold mine. Indeed, except a minority of native miners of Kemogola village, both men and women who come from other countries or other areas of Mali are living in the hamlet. In this place the most of men and women get illegal unions and they are getting children as well. I observed that children who are born and grew up in the gold mine are involved early in mining activities. The social drama of this illegal marriage happens when the couple fights and divorce. And in the gold mine, the richest miners can have sexual relations with different women or girls (prostitution). This phenomenon is new in this local community and it is perceived as a new social lifestyle. Sex trade for money and food or other goods, drug deals and illegal selling of medicine are common in the hamlet. This confirms Crewe E. and Axelby R. (2013:104) finding that:

“In everyday life people’s identities are multiple and changing: every individual has various markers of identity and they change as their circumstances shift and as they age”.

This new life style has attracted a lot of the native youngsters and some of them are mimicking their co-workers and friends. One of the shaking examples is the case of a young Fulani (ethnic), when he told me this:

‘In the gold, a lot of people and even children smoke and use drugs in order to get more stamina. Even me, I am smoking because I am in the gold mine, we are earning and there is free spending ...but in our village, I would never behave in that way’.

7.3. Environmental Consequences of mining:

It seems very difficult to mine in general without destroying the environment particularly with traditional methods. Mining has a huge impact on the environment.

First, the miners' everyday lives practices lead to the anarchic destruction of soil and vegetation. Before they start the mining activities, many trees are cut and burned which is one of the main factor of deforestation. In addition, they destroy the biodiversity, because small wild animals and insects are killed and burnt away as well. A lot of mining areas in the southern part of Mali are completely deforested. ‘In artisanal gold mine, risks and dangers for the physical environment usually result in deforestation, destruction of vegetative cover and soils, pollution of water resources resulting from the use of toxic chemicals in treatments’ mentioned by (Keita 2001:23) during his previous research in Malian artisanal gold mine.

I observed that most miners are using mercury, and soap (omo) during the washing processes, in order to separate gold from unwanted gangue materials and after, these chemical wastes are directly thrown into the river and in the surrounding environment.

Furthermore, after the exploitation, thousands of mine pits dug up by the miners are abandoned.

These mines are estimated at 20 to 40 meters deep, and they are very close each other say only two meters a part, if one pit collapses that provokes the collapsing of the nearby mine as well. There are two kinds of mine collapsing; vertically and horizontally or (under the ground collapsing).



Source: Coulibaly O. Fieldwork in Kemogola, 06/05/2016

Figure 15: Environmental damages/ pits are collapsing.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

In this master thesis, the main goal was to describe and explain the socio-cultural organization of the artisanal gold mine and its impact on the local lifestyle especially in Kemogola, a peasant community in southern-Mali. After describing and analyzing the everyday lives of gold miners in this local community, I realized that the gold mine is an organized social system with many actors who are involved in the management processes which is often endowed with power, with rules of conducts and norms in its own. I found that the social organization of the gold mine was complex due to the scale and the social dynamics of the field.

Indeed, the fact that miners come from different communities and countries with different ethnic groups and dialects explains the complexity of its sociocultural organization, not only for the mine organizers but also for the researcher to grasp and explore the field in a systematic way.

Basically, during my survey process, by following Yacouba Coulibaly who has been a key person driving me to different social layers of the gold mine, I have finally discovered four main actors who are deeply engaged in the mine management with some conflicting roles and have misunderstood each other especially when making decisions. The leading persons are: The hunters, the Ton-Boloma, the traditional authorities or Landowners and the modern authorities or municipality. On the bottom, we have the miners who are not associated with the management and decision-making.

In the mine site of Kemogola, security of the mine is maintained by the hunters considered to be the "police". The gold mine association, Ton-Boloma, is mostly dominated by the natives and a few strangers who are collaborating in with the hunters. They are working together pegging and distributing plots to miners, collecting money from them, securing and controlling all activities.

These groups have implemented laws and rules of conduct and they inflict sanctions as well. In each of them, there is a chief. The Ton-Boloma and hunters are masters of the gold mine because they have privilege and power to make important decisions and they hold the most respectable social position in this area.

Moreover, I focused my observation also in the mining activities process and I found that this activity requires collectivity and solidarity between miners. In doing so, they made up teams according to their criteria mostly dominated by friendship, kinship identities (ethnicity) and personal talent or work experiences. Artisanal gold mining is a process activity, mostly divided in three main parts: digging, pulling out the rope and washing or panning the mud. I noticed that each actor (miners according to gender) has a specific role. In the gold mine, there is an ongoing interaction and exchange discussion not only between team members but also between others teams in the surrounding area, that make the social space very dynamic and ambulant.

In addition, I observed that there is a great wave of attraction of both the urban and rural population to this local area. Through my investigation processes, I have discovered some findings that explain the motivation and attraction of those populations to artisanal gold mine of Kemogola. In doing so, I tried to go beyond my main informant by interviewing other workers in the surrounding area who were also deeply involved in mining activities for years.

-The findings regarding the local peasants' engagement in the gold mine is due to the insufficiency and decline of agricultural incomes. The drought is affecting farming activities, and many farmers are struggling to make ends meet, especially my main informant Yacouba. As an alternative way and an adaptive strategy to their environmental system, these local farmers are joining the artisanal gold mine to earn a living.

-The second finding concerns the attraction of the youngsters to the mine site, which is due to their personal dreams; the idea of '*quick wealth*' is driving force.

In many people's view, the gold mine is a place where a person can succeed within a very short time if he is lucky. This idea drives a lot of people to the gold mine.

-As a third finding, I realized that the role and status of women in their family and the social expectation placed on them in the community explains their engagement in mining. It is compulsory for a wife to help her husband, to take care of children and she is also expected to do all household activities. In order to meet these expectations, the gold mine is the only place for them to earn money and increase their families' incomes. This same phenomenon has led some women to withdraw their young girls from school and drive them to the gold mine.

-The last finding that I discovered during my research is that mining is a main activity for some people, and their involvement is not due to any specific motivation or problem. It is their permanent job.

The gold mine is a complex social field, due to its cultural diversities and identities; the gold miners, through and during their everyday life interactions, give rise to some cultural conflicts and those cultural mixtures have had an impact on the local lifestyles.

I was there for three and half months filming with the video camera, taking notes on the gold miners' social realities and my text and film both reflected the everyday life interaction between these different actors performing in the gold mine.

After my fieldwork, I kept wondering about the future of this community.

First, this place is a farming community, but I noticed that most of those local farmers have started to abandon agriculture in favor of artisanal mining, and during their daily practices, a lot of farming lands are damaged. From then one can wonder:

What is the future of agriculture and environment management in this community?

In addition, many children are giving up education to join the gold mine and child labour has greatly increased in the community;

What is the future of schooling and children's education in this local area?

These are a few concerns I leave open for future exploration.

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