



On the edge of the M2 highway, where the city meets the unnatural landscape formed by massive tailings dams, at the remaining base of one of the city's oldest deep levels mines, Village Main, several groups of worshippers wearing white robes can be seen on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. These are almost all groups of John Masowe and John Marange churches.

Two members of a John Masowe church who meet on the grass-covered bank alongside the old mine shaft explain that they came to use this embankment because they had felt unsafe on what they described as 'the mountain' across the road (in fact a mine dump)—many members had fallen victim to crime. They worship for a 24-hour period every Thursday from 3pm in the afternoon until 3pm on Friday, as they regard this time as their sabbath. They are also visible on Sundays, along with many other Masowe groups who populate the area. The holy spirit is central to their beliefs, and that they do not use the Bible, but that any member of the meeting can be filled with the holy spirit at any time and can preach. "It is easy to tell true from false by the sound of the voice. The spirit provides visions and prophecies."

The only available title deed for the Village Main mine, Erf 51, revealed that in 1923, ownership had been transferred from the Village Main Reef Gold Mining Company to the Vicar Apostolic of the Johannesburg Vicariate of The Roman Catholic Church. We found the remaining structure of this church across the highway: a red pitch-roofed chapel. While the surface is the property of the church, mineral rites below were retained by the mine, and the title deed assured the mine's lack of responsibility for the instability of the surface. In fact the new owners of the land, DRD Gold, have begun re-mining the uranium-rich surface deposits in the area and in 2010 an illegal miner died on falling into the old shaft, which reaches levels of almost 3km deep. On the surface, illegal miners (many of whom are themselves migrants) compete for this unstable, mineral-rich and toxic surface with Christian Apostolics, traditional healers and diviners, as well as criminals and private security personnel, and we should add ourselves, as researchers, to this list of competitors. Here we are presented with a strange confluence of the mysterious and the economic, in the site's physical relationship to the subterranean deposits of gold and in its contested ownership.

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