

TRANSBOUNDARY PROTECTED AREA GOVERNANCE ON GENDER AT MOUNT ELGON NATIONAL PARK

RILEY RAVARY



This summer Riley Ravary spent part of June conducting fieldwork at two sites in eastern Uganda.

Ravary's dissertation uses Mount Elgon National Park, a transboundary protected area, as a point of entry for highlighting gender disparities in conservation governance. Identified as a transboundary protected area, Mount Elgon National Park is an extinct volcano that straddles the national boundaries between eastern Uganda and western Kenya, therefore causing its management to take place locally, nationally, and internationally. Mount Elgon is an important region for transboundary political processes due to its ecological value—housing a large number of threatened and endemic species, and also acting as a critical watershed for neighboring areas in Sudan, Egypt, Kenya, and Uganda (Oonyu 2009; Buyinza 2010). However since the park is a transboundary protected area, governance of the region is complex. There are multiple interested parties involved in governance at Mount Elgon National Park—Kenya Wildlife Services and Uganda Wildlife Authority being the two primary state actors, with additional non-state organizations involved such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Norwegian Agency for International Development, USAID, and EU (Oonyu 2009; Petursson and Vedeld 2015). Additionally, access rights for communities

living near the park differ substantially between and within states, with the Ugandan side generally giving more access rights than the Kenyan side of the park (Petursson et al. 2011).

During her initial site visit, Ravary traveled to Sipi and Bududa, two communities bordering Mount Elgon National park in Uganda. Sipi houses a popular tourist destination within Mount Elgon National Park—Sipi Falls—and also supports an internationally recognized Arabica coffee farming trade. Bududa is located near the southern portion of Mount Elgon National Park, a region prone to landslides and soil erosion. While conducting her fieldwork, Ravary observed community norms and cultures through participant observation,



established contact with research participants, and conducted interviews with over 50 members of the community living near the national park.

Previous research at Mount Elgon National Park has not addressed the relationship between gender, conservation, and governance. Although preliminary, findings from Ravary's research suggest that complex political, social, and gendered relationships are affecting the governance of the national park. With the data she collected during her research in June along with additional data collected from future fieldwork, Ravary will continue to develop her understandings of the implications of

multi-scalar governance in transboundary protected areas on conservation, communities, and gender.

Riley Ravary is a doctoral student in anthropology.