

Agricultural Change Between the Batoro and Bakiga Peoples: Kibale National Park, Uganda

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This past summer I traveled to Kibale National Park (KNP) in southwestern Uganda, where part of my time was spent working on a large collaborative project looking at land use and land cover change around parks in eastern and southern Africa. Working with UF geographers Drs. Michael Binford and Abraham Goldman, I helped to record land use and land cover in a sample of the area surrounding the park. These data show the degree and types of land use intensification that have occurred outside of the park, an area with high population growth which can put stress on the resources available. All of these factors underscore the importance of understanding how the presence of the park may influence the uses of the surrounding landscape.

While collecting the land use data and traveling around the area, we observed some differences in the agropastoral practices of the two main groups of people, the Bakiga and the Batoro, who live around the park. I had the opportunity to use these ideas to conduct a research project on agricultural change around KNP among the Bakiga and Batoro.

When talking with farmers who own land within five kilometers of the park boundary, I was able to learn about the crops that people choose to grow, the animals that they raise, and the agricultural challenges that people face when farming in this area. Additionally, I talked with farmers about the techniques they use to minimize the challenges of farming and asked if the strategies and techniques they use are

different from those employed by other people who live in the area.

Understanding not only the challenges faced by farmers living around KNP but also the factors that influence agricultural decision-making among the Bakiga and Batoro farmers can help to inform poverty reduction initiatives, to influence the successful introduction of new agricultural techniques and crops, and to ameliorate some of the negative consequences of living in proximity to a national park.

Karen Kirner is a master's student in the Department of Anthropology. Her 2009 summer research was made possible by the collaborative NSF project, "Parks as agents of social and environmental change in eastern and southern Africa", led by Abraham Goldman (Geography).

