

TROPILUNCH

Bees, Boundaries, and Policy: Translating NGO Beekeeping Initiatives among Maasai Women in Northern Tanzania

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BIO

Abigail Ryan is an MA/PhD student in Anthropology at the University of Florida. She is completing her MA in Anthropology with a certificate in African Studies this semester and will continue at UF to complete her PhD in Anthropology as well. Her research focuses on East African pastoralism, interactions between local communities and state and international development actors, and gendered responses to climate change and conservation governance pressures. Her work mainly focuses on Maasai communities in northern Tanzania, but also engages with global discussions on modernization, development, and local environmental resource management practices. Her work relies on qualitative approaches to examine the lived experiences of Maasai pastoralists as they navigate constantly shifting development and conservation governance regimes.

SUMMARY

This presentation examines how Maasai women in northern Tanzania negotiate livelihood diversification, gendered authority, and development governance through participation in NGO-supported beekeeping initiatives. The study utilizes participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and collaboration with women's beekeeping groups to explore how development projects become embedded within pastoral social and economic life. Drawing on feminist anthropology, pastoral studies, and the anthropology of development, the findings demonstrate that Maasai women's participation in beekeeping reshapes household economies, collective organization, and community authority while remaining anchored in livestock-centered moral systems. Diversification through beekeeping extends pastoral political economy into new domains of cash management, market participation, and cooperative labor. Although NGOs and donors frequently frame such programs as tools for poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability, and women's empowerment, this study argues that beekeeping initiatives operate as negotiated social practices rather than straightforward development interventions.



Tuesday - March 31, 2026

12:45 - 1:45 pm



Grinter Hall 376 or

[Zoom link](#)

Tropilunch is a seminar run by graduate students from the Tropical Conservation and Development (TCD) Program. It provides a forum for a range of discussions and presentations related to TCD work and research. Special guests, visiting scholars, and practitioners also participate. It happens weekly around lunchtime.



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