The land use decides its ownership pattern: resource use and land tenure in a rural village, southwestern Ethiopia.

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The study of land tenure in Africa has a long history. This paper examines critically some classical frameworks of land tenure studies in Africa and suggests that it is important to pay attention to land variations in terms of the resource use. Among the Oromo society, which is the main ethnic group in the study area, the term abba lafa (a father of land) has been treated as a key concept for their land tenure system. This case study, however, indicates that there is a wide range of land use variation and that its meaning and value can be varied based on the way of resource utilization, and according to the agricultural calendar. In the individually owned coffee plot, labor force is intensively inputted at a very limited time in the harvest season, but it is not exclusively enclosed. In maize field, which is also owned by households, farmers use and keep it exclusively from sowing to harvest, but after harvest, cattle herd of other villagers come in and graze freely. At lowland meadow, the cattle graze all year round and no one owns the land. While the land in settlements, especially along the main street, is frequently sold and bought, the land in each compound of household, enclosed with a fence, is owned and used in multilayered way among family members. All these lands are not under a single local institution, or not fully covered by a certain folk system. The differences of land use influence the degree of exclusivity and the value of the land. This paper reveals the wide varieties of land resources in a rural village and argues that the land use pattern is one of the most significant factors for land tenure.