

Humanizing Landscapes as a Vernacular Response to Rainfall Variability in Northeastern Ethiopia



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Smallholder farmers in Ethiopia's Amhara region are highly reliant on rainfall. Unfortunately, the onset, duration and intensity of the rain tend to vary season-to-season across different communities, and unpredictable patterns of rainfall threaten production of food stocks. Despite increasing familiarity with official daily weather predictions, farmers do not think of rainfall variability as fully predictable. Instead, they hold a much broader vernacular explanation by taking into account other, non-meteorological, causes. Most important are the ways humans interact with spirits and supernatural powers that animate the environment. This understanding supposes that the agricultural landscapes, are living and breathing things, imbued with varying qualities such as differential exposure to risks of erratic rains and other climatic stressors.



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