

# **Ethiopian Village Studies**

(Designed and edited by Philippa Bevan and Alula Pankhurst)

**Dinki**

**Tegulet**

**North Shewa**

researched by

**Setargaw Kenaw and Solomon Tegege**

(Field managers: Bereket Kebede and Shukri Ahmed)

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## Forward

All the reports in this series have been constructed from a number of sources:

- A background paper on aspects of the local culture in which the Peasant Association is located, based mainly on secondary sources;
- Some rapid assessment material collected in the PA by site managers and enumerators whose chief business was administering 3 rounds of a household economic survey which covered a whole year of economic activity;
- A field visit to the site by an anthropologist who took a draft village profile for correction and supplementation. In a few cases the profiles were not ready before the field visit was done, but the same questions were followed up;
- A questionnaire completed by the enumerators at the end of the survey;
- A community economic survey administered by the site managers.

A large number of people has been involved in the construction of these profiles. Most important are the people in the villages who answered questions, raised issues we had not thought of, and provided hospitality for our fieldworkers. The site managers, enumerators, and anthropologists played a vital role, but are too numerous to mention by name here; the names of some are on the title pages of the profiles. Etalem Melaku-Tjirongo and Joanne Moores constructed the majority of the first drafts of the profiles. Sandra Fullerton Joireman provided important assistance in the preparation of the final drafts. Backup in terms of translating, editing, word processing, mapmaking and general support were provided by Tina Barnard, Ziggy Bevan, Girma Getahun, Haile Redai, Sarah Smith, and Ruth Tadesse. Our economist colleagues at Oxford (Shukri Ahmed, Stefan Dercon, and Pramila Krishnan) and Addis Ababa (particularly Bereket Kebede, Getinet Astatke, and Mekonnen Tadesse) provided ideas and conversation from economics which stimulated our thought processes. The administration in the Economics Department at Addis Ababa University was extremely supportive.

Profiles are available for the following villages:

<i>Tigray:</i>	Geblen	<i>Gojjam:</i>	Yetmen
	Harresaw	<i>North Shewa:</i>	Debre Birhan environs
<i>Wollo:</i>	Shumsheha		Dinki
<i>Arssi:</i>	Korodegaga	<i>Gurage:</i>	Imdibir Haya Gasha
<i>South Shewa:</i>	Sirbana Godeti	<i>Wolayitta:</i>	Gara Godo
	Turufe Kecheme	<i>Kembata:</i>	Aze Debo'a
<i>Gamo:</i>	Do'oma	<i>Gedeo:</i>	Adado
<i>Harerghe:</i>	Adele Keke		

Further information about the profiles can be obtained from:

Dr Philippa Bevan  
Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD)  
ESRC Research Group  
3 East 2.10  
University of Bath  
Bath, BA2 7AY  
UK

Email: P.G.Bevan@bath.ac.uk

Dr Alula Pankhurst  
Department of Anthropology and Sociology  
Addis Ababa University; PO Box 1176,  
Addis Ababa,  
ETHIOPIA

Email: pankhurst@telecom.net.et

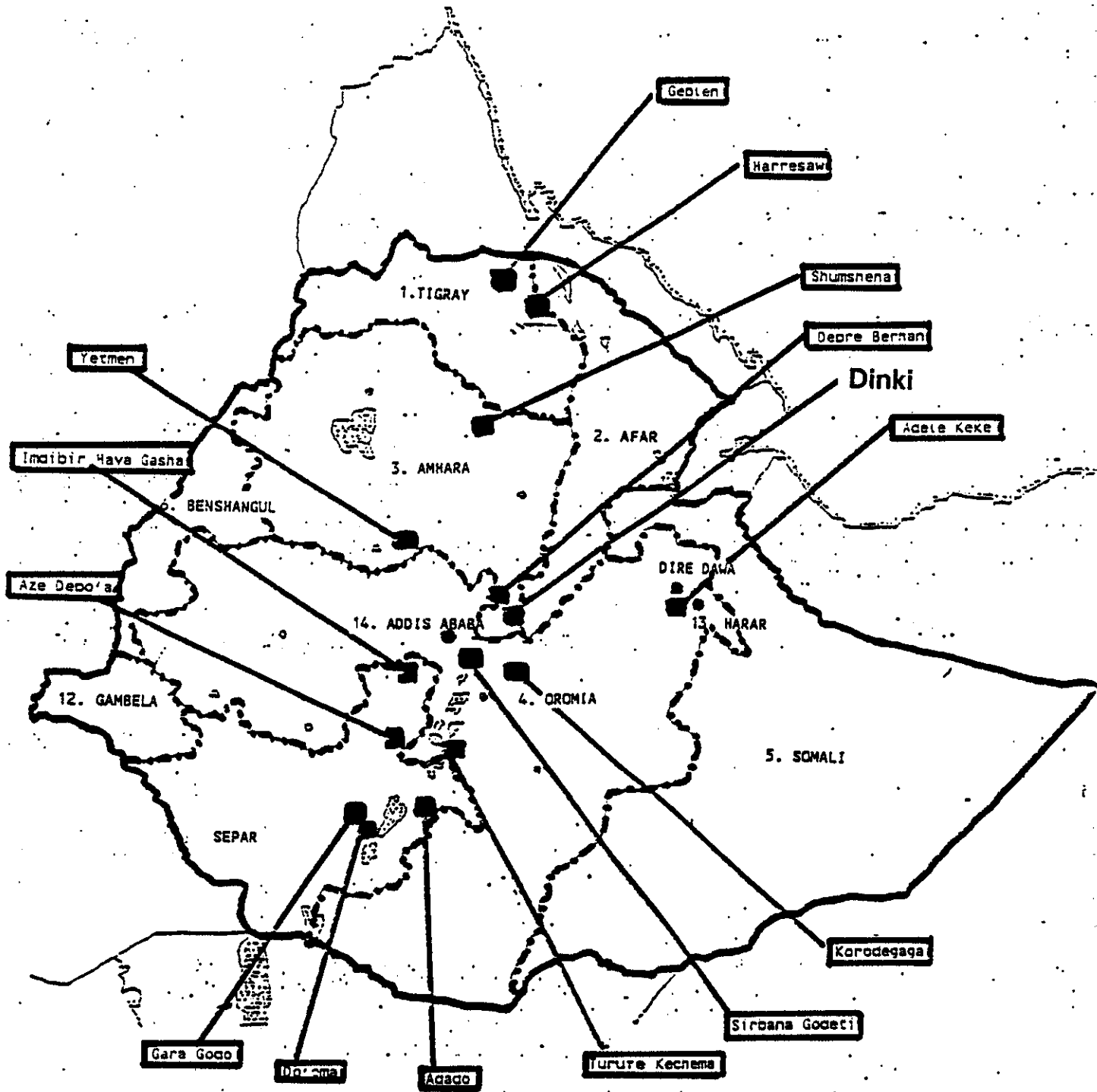
Further information about the household survey can be obtained from:

Bereket Kebede  
Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD)  
ESRC Research Group  
3 East 2.10  
University of Bath  
Bath, BA2 7AY  
UK

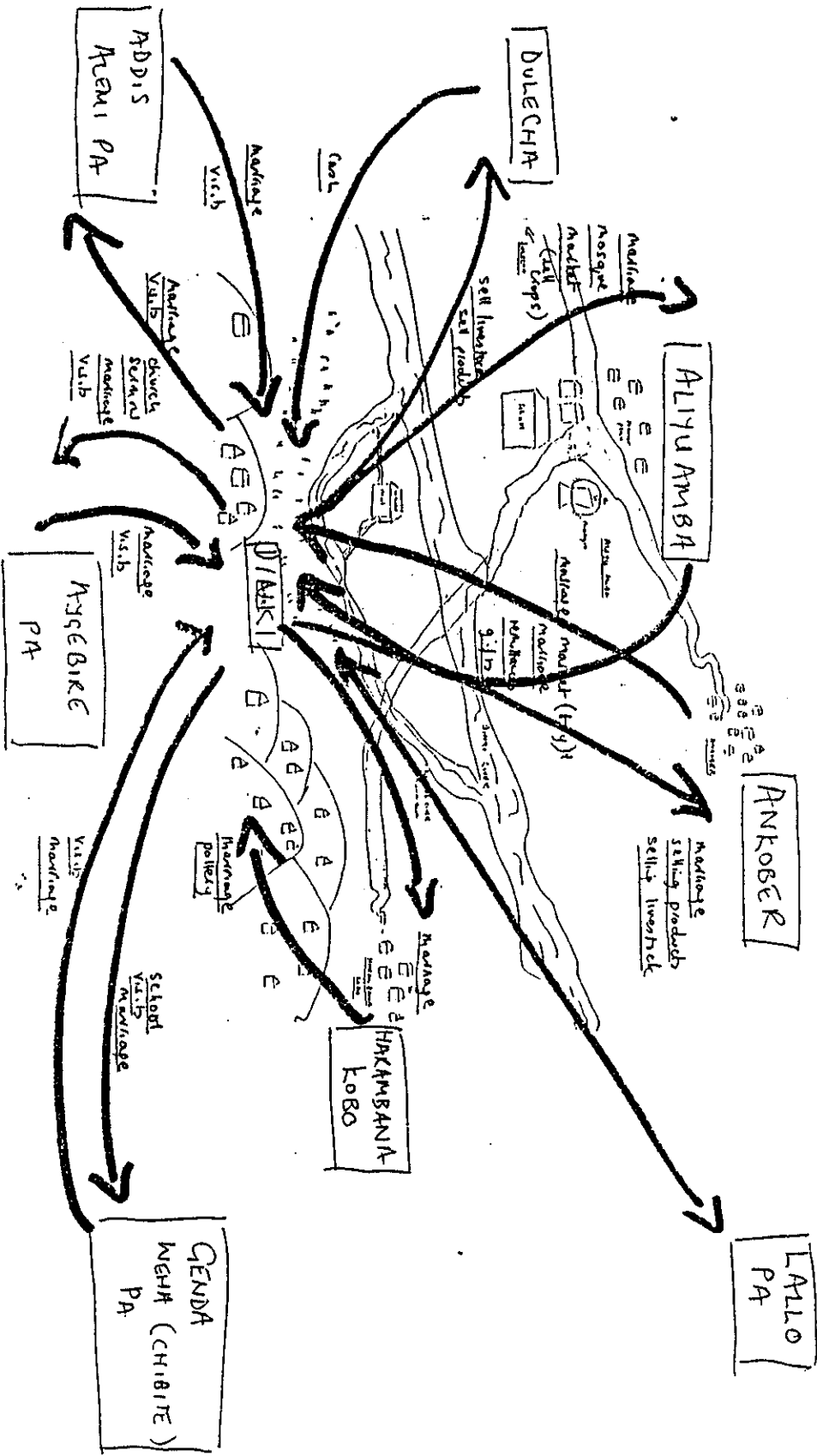
Email: B.Kebede@bath.ac.uk

Dr Stefan Dercon  
Centre for the Study of African Economies  
Oxford University, Economics Department  
Manor Road Building  
Manor Road  
Oxford, OX1 3UQ  
UK

Email: Stefan.dercon@economics.oxford.ac.uk



# DINKI + ENVIRONS



DINKI

ANKOBER

Aliyu Ande

mosque

School

market place

AVERTED CREEK  
KUFUN RUT

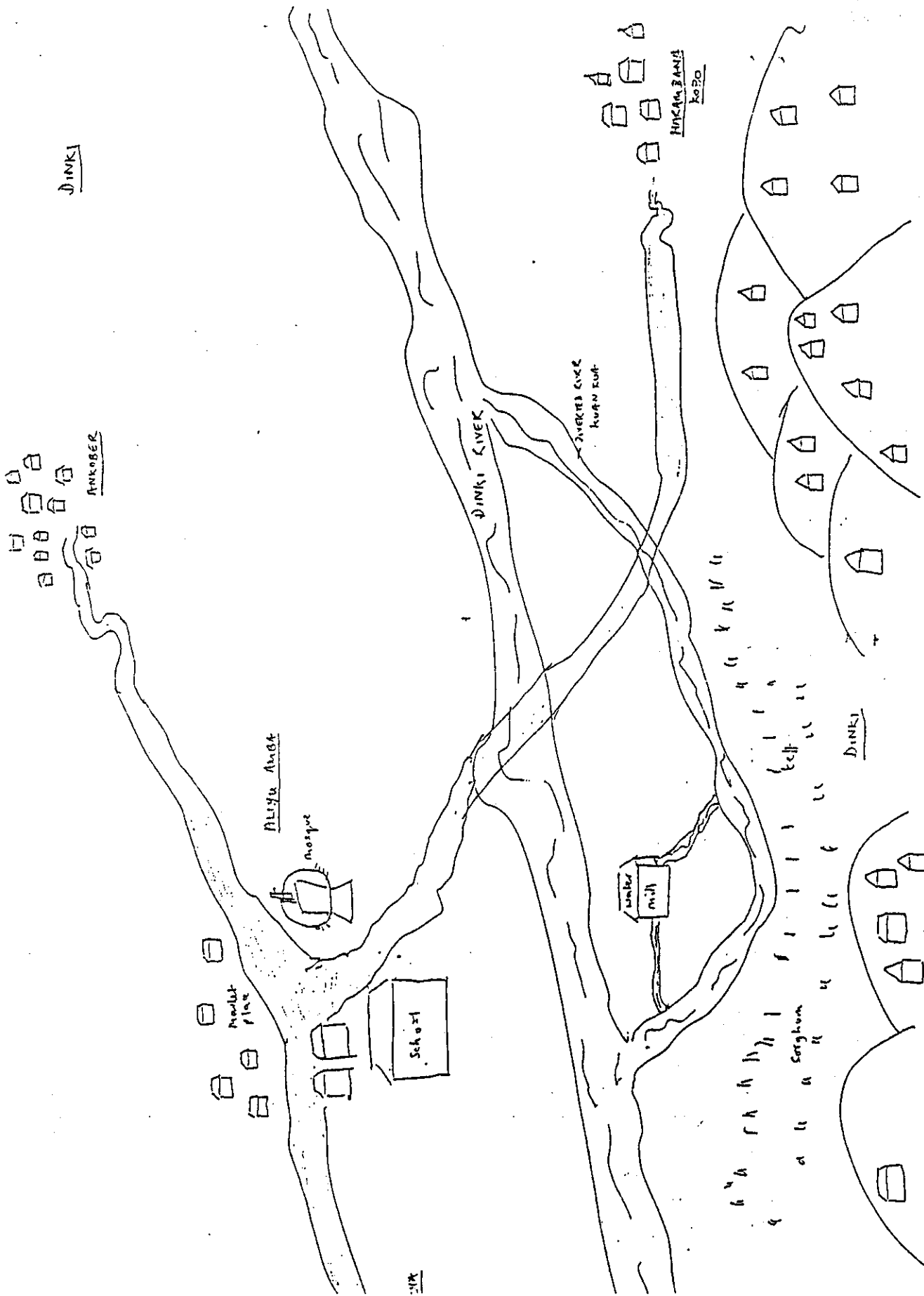
DINKI RIVER

INKAMBA  
KOPU

DINKI

Sorghum

water mill



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# 1. Locating the Site in Time and Place

## *Geography and Population*

Dinki is situated in North Shewa near Ankober. Ankober is one of the administrative *woredas* found in the Administrative Zone of North Shewa which covers most of north-eastern Shewa. Menz and Geshe, Yifat and Timuga and Tegulet are within the North Shewa administrative region. In the recent reorganization of the administrative regions of the whole country, North Shewa is a zone in region 3 which includes Gondar, Gojjam and Wollo. The total population of north-eastern Shewa was estimated at 1.4 million after the 1987 Census. Crude population densities are estimated to be high in the Western districts (80-100 per sq. km) and low in eastern districts (about 10 per sq.km in Dulacha and 30-50 in Yifat, Bure Medayta and Efrata and Jile districts). Dinki is among the 86 PAs administered by Ankober *woreda*. It is 43 kms from Debre Berhan (the administrative seat of the zone) and about 2 hours walk (8km) from Aliyu Amba - a very small town 17 kms from Ankober.

According to one informant there are 138 households in Dinki PA and 643 people. There are 296 men and 337 women. Another said there are 125 households, 27 of which are headed by women. Twelve of these women pay taxes. At the 1995 *woreda* level election in the PA the number of people eligible to vote was 302: 152 men and 150 women. Given the total number this would suggest that children below 18 constitute about half of the population. Informant 1 said there are 57 households not registered with the PA and 23 households which are landless. Informant 2 said there are 30 male-headed and 15 women-headed households which are landless. There are five villages surrounding the area: Aygebir, Addis Alem, Chibiteina Gendamiha, Lalo, and Merereina in descending order of size. Aliyu Amba is the nearest town and is 8-10 kms away. There is no government organization in the town; it is a suburb to the capital of the *woreda* which is 24 km from the village.

In terms of land size Dinki is smaller than neighbouring PAs. The altitude near Dinki river is 1400m and this increases as one goes up in the PA. The zone is *kolla* (lowland) and the site is hilly; the river Dinki runs down the gorges of the village. Dinki PA is relatively poorer than neighbouring PAs.

## *Climate*

Since it is found in the lowland region of North Shewa the climate can be classified as *kolla*. It has two rainy seasons, *meher* and *belg*, the former being the long rainy season which lasts from June to September and the latter the short rainy season from January to April. According to many informants the main season is the *meher*. The *belg* rainy season is not all that dependable since the area is vulnerable to drought.

## *Production*

The economy of Northern Shewa is based on subsistence agriculture:

The economy of Northern Shewa is almost entirely agricultural. Industries, including cottage industries are largely absent. This situation is reflected within agriculture itself. Due to the absence of supporting industries, the level of material technology is low and the market link is little developed. (Ege, 1990:6)

Most of the localities of Northern Shewa are known for grain-pulses cultivation. Fruit and vegetables are grown only sporadically mostly as sources of cash income. Due to the higher land productivity of fruit and vegetables Ege has suggested that these crops provide a potential for the economic development of the area.

There are two cropping seasons at the site: *meher* from April (when ploughing begins) to December, and the *belg* season from January to May. However, since the *belg* rains usually fail, the area is mainly dependent on the *meher* cropping season. The rain mostly comes in July and August.

The main crops grown on the site are sorghum and *tef*; it depends on the individual. Farmers also grow maize, soya beans, chick peas, sunflower, sesame, cotton, and *nug*. The vegetables and fruits grown include papaya, banana, sugar cane, *tiringo*, tomato, potato, and onion. Cash crops grown under irrigation by the river include coffee and *ch'at*. The soils of the region are cambisols. Although these



soils are reddish clays, and loamy sands, in the main, have natural fertility, they are shallow and stony with rock outcrops. The area is a food deficit area. The general quality of the soil is *lemtaf* (semi-fertile).

This year's *meher* harvest was bad. There was a shortage of rain and pests. In 1994 there was a problem of drought. During the last 5 *belg* seasons the harvest has been bad.

### *Infrastructure*

There are no markets in Dinki PA. The biggest market is in Aliyu Amba and is held once a week on Sunday. There is a feeder road to Aliyu Amba, the nearest town (8km) and it is approximately 7km from Dinki to the Dulecha junction. The nearest grain and livestock markets are in Aliyu Amba. There is a Service Cooperative near the town of Aliyu Amba, though not in Dinki PA. Inhabitants of Dinki have not had any services from this SC in recent years. Beledi spring was piped in 1992 by the Lutheran Federation.

### *Social structure*

The Amhara-speaking population are dominant in the PA. There are Argoba people who speak a different language but they are few. There have never been any ethnic difficulties in the site. Amharic is the main language spoken and understood by the people in the area and is used to conduct all social and business transactions. Almost three quarters of the population are Muslim and the remainder are Orthodox Christian. There is intermarriage: one of the partners changes religion. There have never been any religious tensions at the site.

### *History*

One respondent reported that the economic status of Dinki and the surrounding PAs is now such that they cannot sustain subsistence due to under-production. He explained under-production as the negative consequence of "food aid" and "food for work" programmes. These programmes seem to have played a role in making the people non-creative. There is a big river crossing the site but not more than ten people try to use it for irrigation. Donors give 3 kg of wheat per person per day. This survey was done during crop harvesting/threshing time; but some farmers were asking for "food aid". Besides nature, this respondent believes the people are responsible for the collapse of their agriculture production.

Sorghum, *tef*, maize, soya bean, chickpeas, sunflower, sesame, cotton, and *mug* have been grown in the area for a long time. The vegetables and fruits grown include papaya (introduced in 1985), banana (40 years ago), sugar cane; *tiringo*; tomato (20 years ago); potato (20 years ago); onion (introduced earlier); and other plants such as coffee, *chat* and *gesho*

In 1944 the first water mill was built;

In 1958 there was a famine called *dubalech* and in 1954 another one called *shenkute*.

In 1978 a group of rebels rose up led by Captain Shewaferaw. At that time in collaboration with residents he fought against the *Derg* regime policy.

The area was affected by famine in both 1985 and 1994.

In 1991 the soldiers of Mengistu's army fleeing from their enemy crossed through this region. While passing they took money, sheep, goats, sugar cane, etc.

There was no villagisation and no producers' cooperative in the area. More than 50 young men were conscripted and only 10 have returned. No assistance has been provided to these returnees. There was no repression or political violence during the time of the *Derg* and the site was not affected by the war apart from some looting by the soldiers of Mengistu's army when they fled. There has never been any resettlement at the site.

There were crop failures in 1977 and 1986. People have suffered considerable hardships in the last ten years some of which have resulted in loss of human life, livestock and crop failure.

Two unknown Muslim fundamentalists came to the site and tried to persuade the Muslims not to cooperate with the Christians in any social activity or joint service. But this was rejected by the Muslims themselves.

## 2. Seasonal Activities and Events

The following calendars can be found in the Appendix: Health; Water; Crops; Labour (men, women, boys, girls); Migration; Off-farm activities (men, women); Credit (men/women); Livestock; Rain; Pests; Consumption; Fuel; Festivals.

The land is such that it requires a lot of ploughing. For *tef* and sorghum ploughing begins in November and continues until the end of February (*tef*) and March (sorghum). Sorghum is planted in May but is not harvested until the following November. There is more ploughing in April and May, for *tef* which is planted in July and harvested the following October.

*Tef* is eaten between November and May and sorghum between December and April. Maize is eaten between November and July. Banana and sugarcane are eaten all year. The hungry season occurs in July, August and September. Women say they need credit between April and November.

In September they all weed and no other work overlaps. During their slack period, they construct terraces by themselves. Terraces were constructed previously through a food for work programme which has stopped now for a reason they do not know. (Site manager's comment)

## 3. The Farm Economy

### *Crops*

Most of the areas in northern Shewa are known for their cereal and pulses production. Oil seeds like sesame and sunflower are also cultivated. Fruits and vegetables exist only sporadically but, like neighbouring PAs such as Addis Alem and Ch'ebet'e'e ene Gendawuha, Dinki is known for growing various fruit, the main ones being banana, papaya and *tiringo*. Sugarcane is also widely cultivated interspersed with these fruits. Vegetables like potatoes, sweet potatoes and onions are grown and pepper is cultivated by some farmers. The area is a food deficit area. Crops for *wat* (stew) are very scarce. Although farmers grow chickpeas they have to buy beans from highlanders.

Farmers sell approximately a quarter of their output on average. The sale from cash crops is partly used to cover expenses on things which are not available in Dinki and the surrounding PAs. The vegetables and fruits are primarily grown for the market and less for consumption within the household. Farmers who have plots of land adjacent to the irrigation channelled from Dinki river cultivate cash crops such as coffee and *ch'at*. Farmers can obtain coffee seedlings from the seedling station of the Ministry of Agriculture located in Dinki. According to the person in charge the station has about 33,420 coffee seedlings. Farmers are allowed to take as many coffee seedlings as they want - mostly they take between 100 and 200. *Gesho* is also grown and a very few farmers sell it. Some farmers grow cotton which they refer to as *yeferenj t'it*, i.e. a new species of cotton imported sometime in the past. According to informants indigenous cotton has been almost totally replaced by the higher-yielding imported cotton. There are some people who earn money from trees. Fertilisers and other modern inputs are used. They are obtained from the MoA on credit or bought from traders.

### *Livestock*

Cattle are the main livestock reared in Northern Shewa because of their vital importance in the farming activity, especially ploughing. Peasants mainly keep cattle not because they expect benefits such as milk, meat or hides. Rather they keep cattle in order to secure the replacement of the oxen. Sheep and goats are kept by almost all peasants. But these small stock contribute very little to the farm economy. Peasants do not benefit much from them because of the high mortality rate. The main livestock kept in Dinki are oxen, cows, sheep, goats and mules. However, animal husbandry is currently not widely practised in Dinki. Given the hilly topography there is a lack of grazing land and in view of the vulnerability of the site to drought and famine the use of livestock is limited to farm activities and household consumption. Income from the sale of animal products is earned in the area.

The major livestock diseases are rinderpest (*abagorba*; *abasenga*), leeches (*alikt*), and a disease called *kutena* which is transmitted while grazing. Sheep get *kulkult*, goats get "leprosy", and mules get *kantir* and trypanosomiasis.

According to local tradition milk is never sold; only butter and eggs are sold.

Livestock graze on communal land and farmers also practice grazing and cut-and-carry (haymaking) on their private plots.

### *Land*

Before the revolution there were between 15 and 20 landlords, 70 tenants and approximately 25 landless farmers. The fertile land was given to government appointees. One landowner owned more than 60 *timad* (15 hectares). After the revolution, land was allocated to every tenant and to the landless according to family size. Each individual was given not less than 5 *timad*. Land was redistributed again in 1979. And it was given to individuals who were introduced to the village lately from land which was owned cooperatively. There was no villagisation in the site and there was no resettlement from other areas. Since 1991 there has not been any significant change in the land allocation. Out of 132 households 30 of them are headed by "dependent" farmers (*t'eegna* as PA leaders call them). Among the 30 dependent households some have small plots of land not subjected to tax, while others are totally landless. Land which is not taxed is now known as *yedukuman mer't* - the land of the weak. The holding is not subject to taxation since it is considered to be far below the average landholding. Landless people are those who have been married recently and left the management of their parents. There has been no land redistribution to them lately. People unable to pay taxes and levies were dispossessed of their land. Women can own and manage their own farm land.

Some farmers complain that the size of land allocated to them is too small. One can discern differences in size of land allocated to different households, mainly dependent on the physiography of the farmland and its location. Land rental for cash is practised (said one respondent). There is no renting land against cash payment (said another). One index of problems with access to land (scarcity or unfair allocation) relates to disputes. The following case can be taken as an example:

A landless young married man in his early twenties, according to the account given to the anthropologist by his aunt, became an orphan in his early childhood and was living with his grandparents. While he was in his teens his grandfather died leaving a very weak widow behind. As the latter was not able to support herself, part of her plot was given to a person (who was then landless) so he could plough for her in return. The conflict arose when the old lady died two months later. Immediately after her death the one who had been using part of her plot added the plot of the deceased to his own landholdings. He later sold the whole plot in a backdoor deal, moved to another PA and bought another plot for himself. It was at this moment that the grandson of the deceased claimed the land for himself. He alleged that the whole business was unfair because the land belonged to him. The landless young man (who had been supporting his new household by working on the land of a relative on terms of contract known as *megazo* (the plot of land is offered to a farmer to work it and the produce is shared equally)) appealed to the local PA court, arguing that the land must pass to him, on condition that he could repay the same amount of money to the buyer. The dispute is not yet resolved.

An observer reported that there is a shortage of land in the community due mainly to the topography of the land. It is difficult to envisage a solution to a natural problem such as this.

### *Labour*

In Dinki, and in most other local PAs, there are some indications that labour, like land, is scarce. One indication comes from the reply to the question whether agricultural activity is labour intensive. Most informants answered in the affirmative. One obvious reason they give is related to the nature of the land which does not give good yields unless it is ploughed more than once. It also needs manuring. Generally, activities ranging from ploughing to harvesting draw heavily on the labour power of the household and that of other households.

That labour is scarce is also apparent from indirect sources. For instance, the attitude towards education. The anthropologist learned a lot regarding the scarcity of labour from a discussion on

duration with *Ato* Mohammed Said while he was picking cotton from his field. According to him (apparently in his fifties) people (including himself) in Dinki and other places are disappointed by local authorities because they are "taking away" their children from farm activities and sending them to school. "Basically" he said, "I am not against educating children. What we say is the authorities must not take away all of the children belonging to one household. It would have been nicer if one child is taken away from a family which has more than one child. But it is not the case." *Ato* Mohammed even went to the extent of saying that land is not a problem for his people. A small plot could give a great deal of produce if labour is used intensively. He also contended that the problem is not limited to his locality. "It is" he said authoritatively, "a nation-wide problem. Agricultural activity has been deteriorating all over the country because of this one-sided attention given to schooling. Many people are fleeing from the countryside. Since those who are educated are becoming too many, they cannot even get jobs. There must be a legal code for this situation. Agriculture is withering away. The authorities and the school teachers tell us "Your children must not be ignorant like you (they must get education)."

*Ato* Mohammed continued his speech with sarcasm. "But is it not from us, the ignorant, that educated people are born? We say "animal" but is it not from animals (ie cattle) that we get all these things (wealth?) ... Half of us should plough. While farming is a good occupation to earn our living everyone is writing. .. That is why people are going against each other." Meanwhile he pointed out repeatedly he is by no means against education. He stressed that compulsory education for children is draining labour away from agricultural activity that needs it very badly.

As in many parts of Ethiopia the use of agricultural labour involves division in terms of age and sex. People in Dinki, and many other PAs in Ankober, are differentiated into two religious groups, Muslim and Orthodox Christian, and the nature of the division of labour varies between the groups. For instance, women from Orthodox Christian households participate in agricultural activities such as weeding and threshing, while Muslim women do not participate in any agricultural activity. This also seems to apply to the division of labour in terms of age. Most Muslim informants noted that children from Muslim families are not supposed to participate in agricultural activities. They say "Children are not for work, they should be sent to Qoran school". However, this appears to remain at the level of rhetoric. When asked where they find children, for instance, for cattle herding, they replied that they could hire children from Christian families. The next question the anthropologist posed was "What would be the source of child labour for a poor Muslim household?" and they answered that a poor household may use its own children. And they claimed that children from poor Muslim households could be hired by relatively richer households. It seems that the religious distinction wanes when it comes to practice.

In a study of Endode it was found that:

Children were given duties from around the age of 5 to 7. Little girls would help with fetching water, taking care of the crops and so forth. As they got older they would be given more responsibility in cooking and preparing the food. The two latter activities are considered purely female responsibilities. Wives were responsible for processing the products, such as cleaning of the grains and taking them to the mill.

Little boys helped mostly with taking care of the smaller animals, as with lambs and goats. As they grew older they would be given the responsibility for the bigger animals such as cows and oxen. However, when a boy reaches his teens and is physically stronger, he will start to plough. (Dahl-Jorgensen, 1990:119)

However, among small children the gender division in distribution of duties is not pronounced. Boys can fetch water and girls tend animals.

The main activities performed by men are land preparation, planting, weeding, harvesting and threshing. Women are responsible for child care, cooking, wood collection, water fetching, beer brewing, spinning and yarn making. Christian women participate in weeding and other agricultural activities but it is not clear whether women from poor Muslim households also do.

Other than using labour from one's own household there are different ways of pooling labour with other households. One way is to hire the labour of "dependent" households. But this is rare since most households cannot afford to hire labour. Payment may be in cash or kind. A household short of labour may manage to obtain it by offering a plot on a contractual basis (see below under

Interlinkages).

There are 3 labour-sharing systems used in the village:

*Debo*: (for ox ploughing, digging, threshing, manuring, weeding or harvesting) this includes supplies of food and drink and is paid back. It is usually organized on the basis of neighbourhood. When a *debo* is organized by a Christian household two types of drinks are prepared for participants: *tella* (local beer) for Christian participants and *k'eribo* (an unfermented drink with no alcohol mostly prepared in Muslim households) for Muslim participants. If the organizer is a Muslim household it offers only *k'eribo* which can be enjoyed by both Muslims and Christians. This shows the extent to which people cooperate and tolerate each other's faith. Most *debo* is organized for activities such as threshing and harvesting. They may also be organized for constructing houses and fences. Though the anthropologist was not sure if this was practised in Dinki, in some local PAs *debo* is also organized for manuring plots. As Ato Birhanu Tesfaye, a surveyor for the Gene Bank, substantiated, some farmers are known to accumulate manure in pits especially prepared for the purpose for a time of 3 to 5 years. *Debo* are then organized in order to spread the manure on the field.

*Gisso*: this is not paid back; it is done by invitation and involves food and drink.

*Wonfel*: this does not include food or drink; it involves exchange - one works for one at one time and then vice versa.

Households use casual labour for wages in kind and in cash. Men and women both do weeding and harvesting (for 4 *birr a timad* regardless of sex). Men can earn 5 *birr a timad* ploughing.

Christians mainly do not work on Sundays and there are days like the 1st May and every 12th, 19th, 21st, and 29th when people do not work. On average they do not work about 14 days in each month (a total of 168 days a year). Muslims work all the year except their usual holidays.

Men work at weeding, harvesting, ploughing, threshing, and planting. Women work at threshing, harvesting, land preparation, planting and weeding.

For cattle herding a household never employs outside labour. A child from each household participates in one compound as a group. Households do herding turn by turn.

Fencing is done in the form of *gisso*.

### *Interlinkages*

In Northern Shewa since the Land Reform, land has been distributed according to the rights established by the law. Elsewhere in Northern Shewa Aspen identified three kinds of land distribution other than the rights stipulated by the land reform: *tegazh*, *guluma*, and *mekenajo*. "*Megazo meret* is," he writes, "land owned by a person different from the one who cultivates it, and in strict legal terms only persons who are unable to cultivate their land due to health, sex (females), and/or age could enter such arrangements after the land reform" (Aspen, 1993). *Tegazh* are therefore those who cultivate the land (and not the owners) on certain arrangements.

*Guluma* is traditional access to land, especially when land is handed over to one's boy so that he could save the produce for his future marriage. *Mekenajo* is a form of agreement that enables a person who has got only one ox to borrow another from another person so that he can plough his land.

*Rebi* is an arrangement for lending one's own animals to someone else to rear.

In addition to these Dahl-Jorgensen provides us with "gender-specific labour exchange":

A household lacking in an able-bodied male, yet having 2-3 female adults, may help a household with an opposite gender composition during ploughing and harvesting. Ploughing is a typical adult male job, while females help out with harvesting (Dahl-Jorgensen, 1990:117-18).

Dahl-Jorgensen further noted that this agreement is usually conducted between neighbours, friends or kin that share mutual confidence. It is also pointed out that the agreement is dyadic, i.e. it usually involves not more than two households" (ibid.:118).

In Genet, there is a similar work arrangement that involves only two households, i.e. *wonfel*. In Genet, the term is also used to designate the element that is known as *debo* in other areas of Northern Shewa: While *wonfel* is "anything from just lending a hand to a neighbour for a short time and without involving food and drinks," *debo* represents "only full-scale working parties...." (Aspen 1993:59).

In Dinki a household short of labour may manage to obtain it by offering a plot on a

contractual basis. In Dinki the usual practice is offering a portion of a given holding on the basis of *megazo*. According to this agreement the one who is given the land shares half the produce with the original owner. The landowner pays the cost of the seed and fertiliser and the seed cost will be taken from the final product. The landowner decides whether it should be a long-term or *ad hoc* arrangement. Some traders and shopkeepers living in Alyu Amba are said to have plots of land in Dinki as well as coffee plants. Unlike agreements between farmers living in Dinki, agreements between a person who owns a farm while living in town and a farmer who provides his labour are concluded in such a way that the landowner pays half the price of the yield in cash.

### *Technology*

Farmers in Dinki use the traditional ploughing technology as in many parts of Ethiopia which involves two oxen dragging a plough. Some farmers in Dinki were trained in how to make a plough for use with one ox, and practised ploughing with one ox for a time. Those who were selected for the application of the programme were each given 400 *birr* to buy an ox by way of encouraging the new technique, but the whole attempt soon failed. One reason behind the failure could be the difficulty which people have in coming to terms with new techniques. But another problem pinpointed by an informant seems to be the real difficulty. According to this informant the experience of single ploughing is new to an ox which has been used to being harnessed in ploughing with another ox. In particular, ploughing with one ox on a slope is impossible because the ox cannot maintain his balance. Given the hilly nature of the Dinki topography this would be a significant problem. And even if the land were flat, training an ox to plough by itself would be taxing in terms of labour expended and time spent in doing so. In view of the life situation of most Ethiopian peasants the attempt might be seen as a luxury which they could not afford.

Some farmers with plots of land near the Dinki river use irrigation for some crops.

### *Innovations*

The following innovations have been introduced in the community: papaya (1985); banana (40 years ago); coffee; *chat*; sugar cane; *tiringo*; tomato; potato; onion; *gesho*; and different vegetables. The following 6 innovations are those the community thinks are most useful.

1. *Papaya* is grown under irrigation on fertile land. It was introduced in 1985. The people were told that papaya has got vitamins, prevents disease and is a source of income. It was proposed by the World Lutheran Federation and the farmers were trained on how to grow it in development centres. It was very successful and was copied by people who have access to irrigation. People who did not have access to irrigation did not copy because the land terrain was very much up and down. The long run effects seem to be good enough that the plants are green and effective.

2. *Bananas* are grown under irrigation on fertile sandy soil. It was introduced about 40 years ago as it was considered as a source of income. The people do not remember who first introduced it or grew it first. Many people grow it now. It is only those people who do not have access to irrigation water who did not copy. The long run effect is good as their sons did well in their performance.

3. *Tomatoes* are also grown under irrigation on relatively sandy soil. They were introduced about 20 years ago. Tomatoes are believed to be useful for the prevention of diseases and as a source of income. Nobody could remember who proposed it and planted it first; but it is included in daily meals. It is grown by people who have access to irrigation. The long run effects are good.

4. *Potatoes* are also grown under irrigation on relatively sandy soil. Like tomatoes, it is not known who proposed or started growing potatoes. People who have access to irrigation water are growing it. The long term effects are good enough.

5. *Carrots*: People were shown how to cultivate carrots at the development centre.

6. *Other vegetables*: Farmers were shown how to cultivate other different kinds of vegetable at the development centre.

### *Common property resources*

There is communal grazing land. No-one can decide which part is his. The village has nurseries for coffee plants. Water is obtained from rivers and springs. There is a steady supply in May and June, otherwise the supply is plentiful.

### *Environment*

According to the land use plan of the Ministry of Agriculture, land is divided into three types:

- 1) intensively cultivated land, 70% of which is used for the production of annual crops;
- 2) moderately cultivated bushland, 30-50% employed for the production of the annual crops, and 20% for grazing and browsing; and
- 3) open grassland, most of it used as grazing land.

The main problem in the area is soil erosion as the slope of the land is very great. This is combatted through terracing which was previously carried out by the WLF. There is also a great problem with deforestation in the area; the forest is decreasing all the time. There has been a WLF attempt at reforestation but this has not been successful.

Although commercial fertilizers have been used in Northern Shewa it has been observed that the amount is insignificant in comparison to other regions in the former Administrative Region. We have no information about fertilizer use in Dinki. As regards the amount of fertilizers consumed in a year by individual households in 3 PAs (Armanya, Asfachew and Wez Meder) the average is estimated at 1 or 2 bags (a bag is 50kg). This is considered to be a low amount. The main reason is not attributed to the shortage of fertilizers.

It is mainly because the peasants themselves are either unwilling or not capable of buying larger amounts of fertilizers that they tend to buy only one bag per household (Mulugeta, 1990:96)

## 4. Off-farm Activities

### *Within the community*

Weaving is the second most important economic activity in the area. Weaving is done by people who came from *Argoba*. All the Muslims are from *Argoba*. The cloth they weave is for both home consumption and for sale. A few people are engaged in blacksmithing, especially to produce ploughs and other farming tools. They do not constitute a distinct segment; a person may start blacksmithing despite his family background. Also individuals who trade are not treated differently. Women's activities include spinning and yarn making, and brewing.

Another set of off-farm activities relates to the treatment of health problems. In Dinki there are individuals known as *wogesha* who treat bone fractures, joint dislocation, and the dislocation and swelling of muscles. In relation to religious activities there are about 10 Muslim religious leaders known as *kaleecha*. Dinki does not have any Christian religious leaders. This may not in fact be attributed to the predominance of Muslims at the site since there are other surrounding areas with priests, despite the greater number of Muslims living there. One possible reason for the absence of Christian leaders is the absence of a church.

### *Migration*

Migration does not seem to be known in Dinki as a regular source of income. Only two people, a couple, were mentioned to have left temporarily for Aliyu Amba to work there as daily labourers. However, in very bad times people will migrate for temporary employment. In 1988/89 they migrated to Mesobit and Gedeba, to Gachene in Ankober *Woreda* and also to other places.

## 5. Reproductive Activity

### *Household management*

House management is exclusively carried out by women. Among the Muslims of the area all external household supplies are procured by the man, and the woman is in charge of cooking and other household activities. The responsibility for the health of the family rests with the man. Among Christians the supply of food items from outside is assured by women. Both men and women cooperate in safeguarding the health of the family.

### *Fuel and lighting*

Women and children collect firewood for cooking purposes from nearby forests and woodlands. Firewood is also used for lighting in addition to kerosene lamps. Heating houses is not necessary due to the hot climate. Firewood is used the whole year except after the harvest when they use wood mixed with sorghum stalks. It takes a long time to collect firewood in this area. Most households get their wood from communal woods available in the village.

There is no lighting service. Kerosene is brought from Aliyu Amba.

### *Water*

The main source of water is the river called Dinki and also springs in the different parts of the village. Beledi spring has been piped. They do not have to walk long distances.

### *Sanitation*

Like other areas of rural Ethiopia building toilets is unthinkable in the foreseeable future. However, specific sanitary activities are reported to have taken place. According to two medical personnel working at Aliyu Amba clinic, there have been attempts to organize people in Dinki and other malaria-prone areas to clear swamps of mosquitoes during the infestation period. This has been especially practised in the last few years.

### *Fertility*

The division of labour within the household affects the number of children a given household may have. There is a need for more children as sources of labour. Children are a burden only until the age of 5 or 6. In Endode differences in preference between men and women were expressed:

..women stated that their husbands usually wanted male children, while they themselves preferred female children. The reason for this preference, according to the women themselves, was because they would receive more help from their children. The men, on the other hand, did not share this argument and said instead that the gender of the child was unimportant to them. The family, as we have noted, could hire a boy to help the man with duties such as taking care of the animals and ploughing. The women, however, did not have this possibility, but were very much dependent on their own children's labour and especially on a teenage daughter. (Dahl-Jorgensen, 1990:120)

The number of children a given family has is affected by traditional attitudes towards fertility. It is believed that God is the one who gives children and whether one has more depends on his will. Although there is a demand for more births women realize the difficulty of close births. Close births affect farming activity and the wellbeing of the mothers. Some cultural taboos also contribute to better spacing. It is a taboo to have sexual intercourse during menstruation, after birth up to 40 days (which is up to baptism in case of boys), and at times when people want to attend church services the following day (i.e., to be clean when they go to church), although this seems to apply mainly to priests.

Abortion is said to be practised when there is an unwanted pregnancy. Women drink juice from a plant called *Mekan-endod* (*Phytolacca Dodecandra*) and *qulqwal* (*Euphorbia Candelabrum*) during



the first month of pregnancy. The fruit of *Zarch'e-embway* (*Solanum Marginatum*) and prolonged breast feeding are used to prevent conception.

### *Socialization*

The local experts are contact farmers trained, by agricultural extension officers from the Ministry of Agriculture and the World Lutheran Federation, about different agricultural practices.

The following are qualities desirable in men according to a group of women: has good behaviour; hardworking; obedient; strong; being independent and not relying on others; and being kind enough to help people. People are born with such qualities, but some skills can be learnt from the surroundings. Non-school education which children acquire from their parents and the community is gender specific. Boys are taught by their father and are supposed to take on his manners. Girls are taught mainly house management by their mothers. Moral lessons are given informally. Children are told to respect their elders; they are punished if they intervene while grown-ups discuss among each other, etc. Moral education is further reinforced by making children eat from a different plate from the one shared by their parents; and the food served to children usually includes leftovers from their parents.

Socialization is usually done by children looking at what an older person is doing, what a parent is doing and also by getting advice. Girls' training starts with household activities. They start doing it from early childhood.

A successful farmer is hard working, humble, and has a good farm area and good farm implements. There is a distinction between a good farmer and a good man. A good farmer is not necessarily a good person. A man can be a hard worker but he might not necessarily have good qualities. A successful farmer's wife is one who prepares food and assists in the farm work. She should be a good hostess when there is a traditional labour arrangement.

The most important social skills according to the women's group are the following: not being intrusive, never going back on promises, being capable of keeping secrets.

The particular skills a successful farmer's wife should have are spinning and yarn making. This helps to save on money for clothing. Making weaving and spinning equipment and black-smithing are male skills most respected.

Qualities that are not desirable in men include, aggressiveness, theft, drunkenness, and not being good at arguing. The qualities that are not desirable in women are prostitution, not being able to cook well and not managing other household activities. No-one will ask a woman for marriage if she does not have the above qualities even if she is the most beautiful.

The men said it is important to be able to write, read and do sums in the community. There is a formal primary school and a Quran school in this area. At elementary school, they learn language and mathematics. In the Quran school, they learn about Muslim religion in Arabic. There is no church school at Dinki. The nearest one is located at Ankober village.

The women's group said it is not important to be able to read, write and do sums because a woman who knows those things will walk away from her husband. She will always think about the social responsibilities out of her home.

Schooling does not contribute to being a better farmer or a better farmer's wife. Once a person starts going to school, he will not be a better farmer.

Quran schooling makes it easier to earn off-farm income. If a person has attended a Quran school he becomes an excellent bargainer because he does not drink. Attending the formal school does not make it easier to earn off-farm income.

The group said that less than 1% of the boys in the area go to a formal school since the school is far. No girl known to the community is at primary or secondary school. However, about 25% of the Muslim children attend Quran school.

### *Education*

Traditional religious education is practised in Dinki. Quranic lessons are given for children in small mosques known as *kelewa*. Since there is no church in Dinki there is no biblical education. There is no formal school in the village. The nearest primary school (grades 1-6) is at Chibite which is about two hours walk away (approx 6km). It has 151 children (126 in year 1; 23 in year 2; and 2 in year 5) and 6

teachers. There is a shortage of classrooms (4), tables (95), and blackboards (4). There is no shortage of books, chalk, pens and pencils but there is a shortage of paper. There is a primary and junior secondary school (grades 1-8) at Aliyu Amba, approximately 8km from Dinki.

There is no secondary school near. The following factors affect directly or indirectly whether children go to school :

- 1) The physical distance and the nature of the ecology that exists between a village and school. Most of the schools are located far from some of the villages. Some children have to walk a long way to reach school. As *Ato* Kidane Bersuma, the administrator of the school, pointed out parents worry a lot about sending their children to school not only because of the distance but also because of the various dangers their children might encounter in going to and from school. For instance they worry that their small children may be attacked by wild beasts, especially snakes. Recently a new problem was created by the extension of the school calendar to July, which is the month the rainy season commences (a nationwide policy of the transitional government). Many children from this area were forced to quit school since they could not cross the rivers which fill up and become dangerous.
- 2) Even if there is the opportunity to go to school, certain socio-cultural needs that households demand from children are further constraints. Due to the duties children are expected to meet, they are not encouraged to go to school. Even those who have already started to go to school may be forced to quit due to the pressure exerted by farming activities. Most of them would also stop going to school because of the social role they are supposed to play in their own households.
- 3) The increasing difficulty to get jobs after schooling is a disincentive.

As the anthropologist gathered from different sources people in Dinki (and most of the PAs in Ankober, including Aliyu Amba) are equally reticent about both religious and modern education. While discussing the problem of "snatching" children for modern schools, the informant *Ato* Mohammed Said stressed that he, as well as his fellow villagers, would have preferred to send their children to religious rather than modern schools since the former provide spiritual guidance which is much more important than the worldly teaching of the latter. However, due to the high demand for labour people cannot even afford to send their children to religious schools. *Ato* Mohammed said "The new (modern) education snatched our children for science whom we even are reluctant to expose to spiritual lessons". A young farmer who had been listening to the discussion said that the location of schools by itself (the nearest is at least two hours' walk from Dinki) is discouraging. He said that if a school was built nearby parents would be happy to send their children to school since part of the time spent on going to and from school could be spent on other activities. But the old man objected strongly to this: "Whether the school is far or near, all the same it doesn't make any difference to me. Even if it were located at the backyard of my house, it is valueless." Referring to the fate of the young person himself he said "You have attended school in Aliyu Amba. But you were forced to come back and engage yourself in farming activities because you couldn't make use of your education."

Another obstacle discouraging parents from sending their children to school is the absence of schools beyond elementary ones. The total number of schools in Ankober *woreda* is four: two elementary and two elementary plus junior high schools. The latter two which offer education from grades 1-8 are located in Aliyu Amba and Ankober. But then even if children from Dinki get the opportunity to finish their elementary education and pursue their education up to grade 8 in Aliyu Amba, Debre Berhan (60 kms from Aliyu Amba) is the only town where they can attend high school.

Nonetheless, when we look at the attrition rate of students in elementary schools it signals that the problem is much more serious than the absence of further education. The size of classes at Chibete ena Gendawuha PA is a case in point: the size of classes diminishes in ascending order. Out of 150 students only 2 are in grade 6. Most students do not get beyond 4th grade. In Chibete ena Gendawuha PA there is only one student, the son of a wealthy family, who managed to complete his high school education in Debre Berhan. As *Ato* Kidane noted, most people in the PA refer to this boy as a living example of the futility of education since he is now a farmer.

The attrition rate becomes higher when it comes to female students. In the first place, due to traditional beliefs and customs, girls are nurtured and socialized in order to assume the status of a good wife. They therefore get the opportunity to go to school very rarely. However, even those who start are

often withdrawn early since their parents fear they could be raped or kidnapped. There was a case in Chibete': a fifth grade student was kidnapped by her classmate. There was then an attempt by the school administrator to bring the case to court in order to stop such cases in the future. But, paradoxically, the father of the girl counteracted, pleading that there is no need to take the boy to court since the case was resolved by elders.

Furthermore it is also observed that teachers find themselves in a very difficult situation because most students temporarily withdraw during harvest time. When these students return they can be burdens on the teachers since they have to catch up with the others who have been attending regularly. This problem is shared by many schools in rural Ethiopia and the Ministry of Education could respond by designing different calendars for schools in rural areas.

### *Health*

There is no health facility in the village. The nearest government clinic is 10kms away at Aliyu Amba. There is no doctor at the clinic and no nurse. It opens 40 hours a week. It has an irregular supply of antibiotics and malaria drugs; polio and measles vaccines are in regular supply. A course of antibiotics costs 214 *birr* and malaria drugs cost 3 *birr*. The building is poorly maintained and there is no equipment to sterilize needles. There is a cooling storage without backup but a minimum supply of bandages and compresses is not available. The most frequent illnesses seen at the clinic, in order of frequency are malaria, diarrhoea, TB, malnutrition, and childbirth problems. There is no hospital nearby; the nearest one is 66km away. The nearest pharmacy is in Debre Berhan which is 70 kms away and costs 15 *birr* to get to. There are traditional practitioners in the village.

Dinki is one of the malaria-prone areas around Aliyu Amba. Malaria can force people to stay in bed for 2 to 3 months and has a negative impact on farmer's work. Malaria can be treated with traditional medicine but cannot be cured. According to Aliyu Amba clinic, which is in charge of about 20 PAs, malaria occurs almost throughout the year, but the peak time starts from the last week of September and lasts to the end of November. According to the superintendent of the clinic each year the clinic takes precautionary measures before the peak time. For example, they urge PA leaders to mobilize people to clear the swampy areas. When a great number of people are affected by the disease the clinic sends its staff to the sites to offer medicine in the form of tablets, injections, syrup (especially for children) and painkillers. The clinic also collects blood samples and sends them to a laboratory located at Lemi, Merabete *woreda*, to identify the type of malaria affecting the people. There have been no reported deaths from malaria this year. The clinic also administers vaccinations to mothers and children. While the anthropologist was in Dinki one of the medical personnel from the clinic was vaccinating women in the administration office of the PA.

A group of men ranked diseases as problems in the following order: malaria; typhoid fever; *Mogne Bagegne* (lit. is found a fool); headache; fever; waterborne disease; joint pain; trachoma; flu; false measles and measles; elephantiasis; haemorrhoids.

A group of women ranked diseases as problems as follows: malaria; typhoid; *Mogne Bagegne*; measles; mumps; and fever (headache, feeling scared, etc).

The groups were asked to describe causes, preventive measures and treatment for the diseases they had named and these are now summarised.

*Malaria*: Both a group of men and women asked say malaria is caused by a mosquito bite. It could be prevented by spraying DDT which is not applicable nowadays because of unknown reasons. The women try to prevent it by chewing raw garlic. Malaria is treated by drinking butter and honey or taking Chloroquine tablets if it does not get better.

*Typhoid fever*: According to the men typhoid fever goes side by side with malaria. However, the women's group said it is caused by famine and drought. Nothing is done to prevent it in the community. Once they get the illness they visit the health clinic for an injection. However, when it reaches an epidemic level, a group of medical personnel will be sent by the Ministry of Health. There is no traditional treatment for typhoid fever.

*Mogne Bagegne*: The cause is not known to the community. It comes suddenly and is only recognized when someone is ill. This disease is treated (100%) only by traditional healers. They eat garlic and lemon to prevent. They treat this illness by cutting a vein using a razor blade.

*Headache*: is caused by the sweltering sun and can be prevented by putting on a hat or covering the head with cloth. Treatment is mostly by putting fresh butter on the head. A few people also take tablets.

*Fever*: is also caused by the sweltering sun. The best way to prevent it is to stay at home when the sun's heat is very strong. This is treated normally by taking a cold shower. A few get medical treatment. Fever in children is caused when the mother gives birth, the child accidentally will be caught by the disease. It can not be prevented. The child is healed by traditional methods.

*Waterborne diseases*: are caused by aquatic insects. There is no prevention known. But once sick, drinking tobacco leaves is the first treatment, then visiting the health clinic if it does not get better.

*Joint pain*: occurs during cold weather. They do not have a way to prevent this illness. It is treated by sitting outside when it is sunny.

*Trachoma*: is caused by sun stroke and dust. No prevention mechanism is known to the community. Using eye ointment from the clinic is the way to treat it.

*Flu*: is caused by bad smells and sweat. This can be prevented by taking showers regularly. It is treated traditionally by using a herb.

*False measles and measles*: are contagious diseases whose causes and prevention mechanisms are not known. Pop corn (*kollo*) and *nug* are used for treating it.

*Elephantiasis*: The cause and prevention of this disease are not known. The person suffering from this illness gets treatment by visiting the nearest hospital on a regular monthly basis.

*Haemorrhoids*: The cause, prevention and treatment of this illness are not known to the community till now.

*Mumps*: The cause and prevention of this disease is not known. According to the women, it disappears after 5 days swelling. Those ill are advised not to take butter and water.

Although there are no reported cases of patients with symptoms of AIDS the anthropologist found people's awareness of the disease to be encouraging. "This is reflected in some people's reply that they use condoms; they said this without the slightest sign of a blush on their faces.

## 6. Consumption

### *Food and other day-to-day goods*

The household is the basic consumption unit. In times when there is no drought or famine the staple food for most households is *injera* (prepared from sorghum) and sauce (prepared from beans and chickpeas). Sometimes people also use banana, pepper, or sugar mixed with pepper as a substitute for sauce.

In times of war, drought or famine, wild foods are eaten. During the war between Italy and Ethiopia in the late 30s and early 40s plants known locally as *wof zerer*, *fenchek'o*, *alma* and *ant'aria* were consumed. These same plants and wild fruits such as *enkoy*, *sholla*, and *kulkwal* were consumed during the 1984 famine.

Although each household offers the same kind of food to all its members, all members do not eat from the same dish. In Muslim households husbands may eat alone while wives may share their food with their children.

Local measurement units are as follows:

1 *dawla* = 160kg

1 *silicha* = 64kg (Big *Silicha*)

1 *tassa* = 1 kg

1 *kil* = 8 litres

1 *gan* = 100 litres

1 *birchiko* =  $\frac{1}{2}$  litre

1 *ensira* = 25 litres

4 *timad* = 1 hectare

1 *gasha* = 40 ha

1 *dikuman* =  $\frac{1}{4}$  *timad*

## *Housing*

Most houses in Dinki are built of wood plastered with mud and have thatched roofs. There are a few houses with tin roofs. Informants in Dinki explain that there are no houses built of stone, not so much because of lack of resources, as due to the vulnerability of stone-built houses which can become breeding places for snakes and other reptiles, given the hot weather of the place. Tin-roofed houses are also regarded as of no value due to the weather.

The largest houses have two rooms. The average cost to build a house is estimated to be 1,500 *birr* for a house which may last up to ten years.

## 7. Local Institutions and Organizations

### *Households*

The household is the basic unit and this reflects the Amhara social organization at an atomistic level. The household, a self-sufficient and subsistence-based unit, may include individuals (mostly dependents and servants) other than those normally part of a nuclear family. It is also characterized by a division of labour based on sex and status. Donald Levine pointed out that the Amhara household is more of "a unit of political economy" than a family (Levine, 1975)

As is the case with other communities in Northern Ethiopia in Dinki the household is the basic socio-economic unit at the site. Membership in a household depends on its developmental stage. A newly married couple could be the only members of a household. Such a household has little labour power compared to its consumption needs and the same situation may reappear when the couple grows old. When children are born they become part of the household. The household may also include other dependents of one sort or another.

An additional category of non-nuclear household members are children of one of the spouses from earlier marriages. Adoption is not very common in the area. The term for both an adopted child and the child of one of the spouses is the same, known as *ya-injera lej* (literally *ya injera* child, *injera* being the main meal and commonly used metaphor of food in general, or in its widest sense of basis of living) (Aspen, 1993:17).

### *Marriage*

Marriage is similarly arranged among both Christians and Muslims. Since marriage is thought to be the union between families, the family of the would-be groom would send its proposal via certain selected elderly men to the other family. When a son wants to get married, the girl's parents will be asked to give their daughter by his parents, and every expense is put on the shoulders of his parents. When a girl is married, a dowry is given from the bride's family. Goats, garments and some grain will also be given to the bride's family. Every relative will give something depending on what they can afford.

Certain preconditions must be fulfilled for the proposal to be accepted by the father of the girl. The would-be groom must secure, at a minimum, a plot of land, an ox and a plough. Parents give their son farm implements, build him a house, or buy him clothes for the wedding. For their daughter parents give oxen or money and they get dowry from the bride's family. Other kin are not expected to give or receive presents.

One respondent reported the following dowry aspired to now:

For Christians from the groom: 1 *gabi*, a pair of shoes, 1 dress, 1 umbrella, and 1 ox. In return the bride's family give the groom's family 1 calf.

For Muslims from the groom: 4 dresses, 4 towels, 4 lingerie, 2 pairs of shoes, 4 head-dresses, and 5 bottles of perfume.

In general dowries consist of livestock and wooden boxes. The amount of cash given can vary from 200 to 500 *birr*.

If the proposal is accepted an appropriate day will be fixed for a contract of engagement (*fetemtem*). On this day the girl will be given a set of gifts usually consisting of a garment or two, a pair of shoes and a scarf. This is also an occasion for fixing the wedding date. In Dinki, as in most

other places, it is customary for the wedding ceremony to take place at the girl's house, partly supplied by her husband. This includes payment of 200 to 400 *birr*.

At the time of the wedding the groom goes to the house accompanied by his best men and some other colleagues. It is at this juncture that Muslim and Christian weddings are differentiated. If the bride and groom are Muslims the groom must stay several nights at the bride's house, while in the case of Christians the groom would not stay the night at her place. One month or two months after the wedding a small feast known as *melash* is prepared by the parents of the groom.

One informant said that polygyny is not practised; even the Muslims do not practise it because they are poor. He also said that bridewealth is paid according to wealth. Poor people may only give a skirt; richer ones will give garments and other necessary things. It is the same for Christians and Muslims.

### *Divorce*

In the case of divorce there is a clear difference between Christians and Muslims. If a Christian couple divorce, the bridewealth and the dowry will be divided equally or the division will be proportionate to what they contributed. On the Muslim side, if they divorce, the woman will take her clothes and 30 *birr* only. In the case of death of a partner, the widow is expected to wait until the one year ceremony, after which she can remarry (Christian). In the case of Muslims, the widow can remarry a month after the funeral ceremony.

### *Inheritance*

Inheritance depends on whether the father died before the will was written or not. If he died before, his wealth will be divided in such a way that the males get  $\frac{2}{3}$  of his wealth and the females get  $\frac{1}{3}$ . If he has a will the property will be distributed according to his wishes (Muslims).

When a husband dies, a quarter of his wealth will be used for the funeral arrangements and the subsequent ceremonies like 40th day, 80th day, a year, etc. The rest will be given for the wife and the children. The share a child gets depends on his/her closeness to the parent. The closest gets more depending on the will. (Christians)

### *Markets*

There is a market in the village and the next nearest is 10kms away. The regular market day used to be Sundays but now it is changed to Thursdays.

### *Credit and Social Security*

All the people in the village are under obligation to help in the case of crisis. People also assist and get assistance from other villages, friends and relatives. When an oxen dies, the price of the oxen will be levied on the people and everyone contributes. If a house is burnt down, people help by bringing different items to construct the house, such as wood, grass, etc. The role of *idir* and *equb* are discussed below under *Local Organizations*.

### *Community decision-making*

Community problems are first considered by elders who will settle them if they can. Elders pass the problem to the PA if they can solve it. When the PA can not settle it they pass it to the *woreda* council.

### *Local organizations*

In rural Ethiopia, both voluntary and involuntary forms of associations play a significant role in maintaining the social organization of the peasantry. A typical example of involuntary associations is the age-grade system of gada among the Oromo. Among the Amhara we find only voluntary forms of association. In northern Shewa types of association can be grouped into the following: religious, economic, political and labour associations:

#### *Religious associations:*

*Mehber* and *Senbete* are religious associations founded by a group of people who belong to the same church. There are two types of *mehber* in Dinki: one associated with the names of particular saints. The saint's day is celebrated every month with a feast. Each member is responsible for the feast (food and *tella*) in his or her turn. Guests who are not members are invited from the neighbourhood. People from neighbouring PAs can belong to the *mehber*. The other type is known as *senbete* and is prepared by each member in turn in the compound of the church. There are no religious associations among Muslims similar to the Christian *mehber*.

*Qurban* is a ceremony which is held to commemorate the death of a close relative. The 40th day, the first and the seventh anniversary are the major ones. It is a religious obligation for everyone concerned regardless of the economic position. The size of the feast depends on economic position. For the rich, preparing a big feast is a way of displaying one's wealth while for the poor it is economically demanding.

*Idir* is a sort of religious burial association which is established in order to share the burdens of individual households when close relatives die. Members contribute regularly in order to cover the expenses of funeral ceremonies, and the food and drinks needed. *Idir* are also used to collect money for members during moments of heavy loss, like the death of cattle or the loss of a house due to fire. *Idir* (for both Christians and Muslims) is a prominent association in Northern Shewa, as is the case in most parts of Ethiopia. Usually each parish in Northern Shewa has one *idir*. In Dinki there is one *idir* which involves followers of both Christian and Muslim religions. In addition to the monthly contribution of 50 cents to 1 *birr*, members also contribute labour and food at the time of the death of a member or a close relative of a member. In case of failure to fulfil one's obligations there is a fine. People who are not members of *idir* also help each other in times of crisis.

#### *Economic Associations:*

*Equb* is a major economic institution that primarily serves to save cash. It is a formalized association with a secretary and a judge and usually a board of three persons. Each member has to find a guarantor of the *equb* member to ensure that the member does not fail in his duties after he or she has received a lot. Sometimes people join *equb* to buy something that they could not afford from their own pocket. These include clothing, food, household equipment, livestock, to pay tax, etc. In Dinki informants guessed that there could be some *equb* associations each consisting of 30 to 40 members who contribute 2 to 5 *birr* weekly; each member collects a maximum of 300 *birr*. There are *equb* for clothing (*shemi-gabi*). About a quarter of Dinki residents are members.

#### *Political Associations:*

The *Council of elders* is an institution where people appeal when they are involved in conflict with their neighbours. Certain individuals respected for their experience and wisdom play a significant role in conflict resolution. The moral authority they assume helps them solve a number of problems. In this respect a council of elders has much more acceptance than a local justice department sponsored by the Peasant Association.

The role of *spirit possession cults* in conflict resolution is not something to be underestimated in this area. Spirit possession in Northern Shewa is closely intertwined with the elements of the wider cultural fabric of the study.

#### *Labour agreements:*

No man works alone. All activities are done in *gisso* (works the same way as *debo*).

*Gisso* is one of the work arrangements temporarily arranged to share the agricultural work in the field. The activities include ploughing, manure spreading, threshing. Members of the *debo* are required to work on the other members plot when requested. Food and drinks are offered on the day of the *debo* so that the participants could work the whole day. The most important factor in the participation is neighbourhood. Partnership is also based on kinship relationships.

*Wonfel* is anything from just lending a hand to a neighbour for a short time. It does not involve food and drinks.

Some local organizations were ranked according to usefulness to the community in the following order:

1. Nursery (1987)
2. Development agents (1980)
3. Peasant Association (1975)

## 8. Beliefs and Values

### *Land*

Among the religious beliefs associated with land is the one entertained by most Christians who want to be buried in the burial grounds of a church located in or around their area of origin. According to informants this is not the case with Muslims who could be buried wherever there is a burial place for Muslims. There are a few sacred places, among which is a burial place for Muslims near Dinki which is revered by both Muslims and Christians. People living at the site do not even dare to collect firewood from it.

### *Religion*

The local religions are Islam and Orthodox Christianity. The majority of people (about 75%) in Dinki are Muslims like other places around Aliyu Amba. All Argobas are Muslims. There are a few cases of inter-marriage between Muslims and Orthodox Christians which are arranged on the basis of the conversion of one of the partners to the faith of the other. Due to the predominance of Islam at the site most conversions are from Christian to Muslim.

There are various forms of interaction between Christian and Muslim. People from both religions participate in *idir* and *equb* together. Both Muslims and Christians are also known to visit annually a pilgrimage site in Herr-Amba, about seven hours walk from Dinki. There are also certain commonly celebrated holidays including the Ethiopian New Year and Good Friday.

They are strict in their respective fasting times. Christians do not work Saturdays and Sundays, St Michael's (on the 12th of every month); St Gabriel (on the 19th); St Mary (on the 21st); St George (on the 23rd); and Bale Wolde (on the 29th) days of each month.

In Dinki and other sites around people also practice traditional beliefs like spirit possession cults and *adbar* (a guardian spirit mostly represented by a tree). People also practice certain group rituals around *adbar*. Spirit possession cults are an important part of the cultural fabric of Northern Shewa and play a considerable role in conflict resolution.

### *Explanations of misfortune and illness*

The local explanation for illness is *mitch*. There are no witch finders, but there are traditional healers who use local medicines to heal the sick. It is only God who makes rain.

### *Political beliefs and attitudes*

The anthropologist found it difficult to get answers to questions related to political beliefs and attitudes. Some would dislike the very question let alone providing responses. However, he managed to detect some of their attitudes from discussions centred on other topics. Almost all informants from Dinki and Aliyu Amba speak of the peace and stability attained in the area and this they attribute to the Transitional Government. He came across a complaint about the tax paid annually by farmers: they pay 20 *birr* as a land tax regardless of the amount and quality of the holding. There is also discontent among landless farmers and most hope to see this problem resolved in the near future. There is a rumour that a new reallocation of land will take place.



## 9. The Community

### *Community organization*

Despite the religious heterogeneity of the community the Dinki community stands as one administrative unit headed by an administrative organ which consists of 1 chairman and 1 secretary. The PA also has a court and a security wing which consists of armed men headed by one man known as "commander". The basis for Dinki as an administrative unit is simply territorial: there are no separate quarters for distinct social groups. As the settlement pattern shows people live interspersed. Membership in a given hamlet is not based on religious affinity. In fact there are certain hamlets in which most occupants are related but this does not exclude others from living in the same hamlet.

### *Politics*

There is a PA council which has a representative from the *Woreda* council to channel orders from top down and information and requests from bottom up.

### *Social conflict*

Both ideologically and practically the two ethnic groups, the Argoba and the Amhara, have been allies against the Afars. Although the Afars are Muslims the Argobas, who are also Muslims, have never sided with them. The alliance between Argobas and Amharas against the neighbouring Afars has been repeatedly witnessed in many armed conflicts. Most of these conflicts have taken place in market places such as Dulecha, Zut'i, and Senbete' where people from all ethnic groups participate. However, it has been several months since such a conflict occurred. Informants indicated that due to the intervention of local officials and elders a temporary peace seems to have been attained at this time.

Nonetheless, as is the case in many parts of northern Ethiopia, blood feuds (*dem meqabat*) are still a reality between individual families. Kin groups cooperate much more significantly in this respect than in economic matters. This is reinforced by values attached to vengeance. A person who has not been able to avenge the death of a kinsman is subjected to much ridicule during funeral occasions and is even labelled *dem t'ech'i* (blood drinker).

Blood feuds are mostly handled by elders. Most feuds would be considered for settlement at a time when the number of victims from the feuding parties are considered to be proportional. The usual way of resolving such a conflict is banning the movement of members of the contending families from participating in public occasions like weddings, funeral ceremonies, and market places. The saying "an eye hates blood" (*dem ayn yit'elal*) reflects that a temporary sanction prevents the feud from relapsing.

The other traditional known method of conflict resolution is paying *kassa* (compensation) to the family of the deceased. But this method is rarely used since people believe it to be cowardly. An individual who has accepted compensation would be ridiculed as "a person who has benefitted by selling his brother's blood".

Realizing the proliferation and severity of the problem from time to time, there was once an attempt (but in vain) by the government to stop such conflicts once and for all. A committee known as the "Blood Drying Committee" (*yedem adraki komite'*) was organized from *woreda* down to PA level. This campaign, however, did not last for long.

### *Poverty and wealth*

The village is poorer than surrounding villages. There are no wealthy people in Dinki. This is due to the landscape, shortage of rainfall, and successive failure of the *belg* rainfall and *belg* harvest. The above factors make the area among the poorest of all. "You always observe problems in the households. They always depend on someone's shoulder"

During a wealth-ranking of the community households included in the economic survey 2 sets of respondents allocated all households to group 3 (out of 3) - the poor. One set of respondents allocated every household but one to group 3. The lone household was put in group 2 on the grounds that he "can manage himself at problem periods". When asked what it was about the households that caused the respondents to put them in the poor category some of the answers were as follows: sickness,

too many children, has nothing, cannot help others, gives land for fixed rent, no productive materials, too old, death of livestock, no oxen, only a cow, landless, no supply of inputs, no man in the household, too young, unlucky, etc. The Dinki community has been described as aid-dependent which is likely to have affected the responses. It seems unlikely that there is no differentiation in terms of wealth.

### *Social mobility*

Asked how frequently households move down from category 1 to category 2 or below 1 group of respondents said that no households do so since there are no rich. In this area they say someone is wealthy if he has the capacity to sustain his family through problematic periods and can help other households. There is no chance of upward mobility because the area is drought-prone. The only way to get wealthier in the area is to get introduced to the town and get involved in trade. This cannot happen if people stay in Dinki all the time. People become poorer when they become old, sick and lazy, and if the man of the household dies. The other 2 groups of respondents agreed that everyone is poor and that it is impossible to become wealthier living in the area because it is drought-prone.

### *Status*

The most respected in the community are those who wish good for the people, who give advice to people, who find solution for disputes and so on. The most respected also work hard.

## 10. Relationships with Other Communities and the Wider Society

Some indication of these is given in Map 2 of the profile.

### *Effects of government policies*

An observer said that the goods in the market were too expensive for the community to buy, given its low income. He said people are not happy about regionalization or the Constitution. They said the Constitution has been imposed on them from above and they were not consulted during its drafting. People are not clear about democracy and do not understand how to use it. There were no security problems in the area.

### *Government activities in the community*

In 1974 Imperial Haile Selassie was overthrown;

In 1975 Land reform was declared;

In 1979 Illiteracy campaign;

In 1980 Development agents were established;

In 1984 National military service started;

In 1981 A school was established;

In 1977 Political cadres were elected;

In 1993 Political cadre for EPRDF

In 1994 The Ministry of Agriculture started its function: it has nurseries where people work as daily labourers. Extension agents have also taught farmers to use fertilisers, herbicides and other inputs.

A group from the community ranked the three most useful of these as:

1. Illiteracy campaign
2. Ministry of Education
3. Ministry of Agriculture

### *NGO activities in the community*

There are about thirteen non-governmental organizations working in the 15 *woreda* of Northern Shewa. The rehabilitation and development activities launched by these NGOs were initiated after the famine. They all came as relief organizations during the famine and then transformed into "integrated rural development programmes", conservation, agricultural package activities, etc. Nine out of the thirteen organizations work with governmental organizations such as the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, Ministries of Agriculture, Health, Education, etc.

The NGOs include:

Action International Contre La Faim  
The Baptist General Conference Mission  
The Baptist Mission of Ethiopia  
Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief  
Ethiopian Evangelical Church, Mekane Yesus, Addis Ababa Synod  
Lutheran World Federation  
Medicin du Monde Over the World  
Redd Barna - Ethiopia  
Save the Children (USA)  
UNICEF  
World Vision International

These NGOs were involved in the following activities:

	%
Water development	16
Afforestation	14
Health	11
Infrastructural development	9
Rural credit	9
Agricultural production	7
Animal husbandry	7
Soil conservation	7
Nutrition	5
Social services	5
Training	5
Crafts/cottage industry	4
Education	1

There has been considerable NGO activity in Dinki, particularly between 1988 and 1991:

In 1985 ILCA introduced itself : it provided some oxen

In 1987 The Lutheran World Federation paved the way to introduce itself: it helped the people to build the road into the village through food for work.

In 1994 the missionary group Mekane Eyesus started to give aid to the society in the last drought

In 1994 the arrival of a second group of people to study the society

In order of usefulness some members of the community ranked these activities in order of usefulness as::

1. ILCA
2. LWF
3. Mekane Eyesus

## *The future*

An observer said that the area has witnessed serious drought conditions in the past and that it is high time that the farmers were able to make use of all nearby rivers to produce enough food for themselves.

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### **Glossary**

- Ato:* A title of respect for a man; Mr.  
*Belg:* A short rainy season usually occurring during February/March/April. The harvest from this season takes place in July and August.  
*Birr:* The currency of Ethiopia (9 birr= approximately £1).  
*Ch'at:* A plant which has leaves which contain a mild narcotic. Its leaves are chewed.  
*Derg:* The name of the military government which ruled Ethiopia from 1974-1991.  
*Gabi:* A shawl-like garment made of a double-layer of white cotton cloth.  
*Gesho:* A plant which is used to make beer.  
*Injera:* Ethiopian flat bread.  
*Megazo:* Share-cropping.  
*Meher:* The main rainy season - in most places from June to mid-September. Crops sown during this period are harvested from October to December.  
*Mengistu:* The leader of the *Derg* government which ruled Ethiopia from 1974-1991.  
*Noug:* Rapeseed.  
*Tirengo:* A type of fruit.  
*Woreda:* An administrative division.

### **ACRONYMS**

- EPRDF: Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front  
MoA: Ministry of Agriculture  
PA: Peasant Association  
SC: Service Cooperative  
WLF: World Lutheran Federation

## Dinki

Farmwork		Crops/off-farm (Christian women)											
		Mesqerem	T'eqemt	Hedar	Tahsas	T'er	Yakatit	Magabit	Miyazya	Genbot	Sane	Hamle	Nahase
<b>MEN's version</b>													
Tef		weeding	harvest	ploughing					ploughing			planting	weeding
					threshing								
Sorghum				ploughing					planting		weeding		weeding
				harvest									
					threshing								
Maize				ploughing								planting	
				harvest									
					threshing								
Other crops				harvest									
					threshing								
<b>WOMEN's version (Christian)</b>													
Tef			harvest								land preparation		weeding
				threshing								planting	
Sorghum			harvest					land preparation		weeding			
			threshing					planting					
Maize									land preparation		planting		
Banana		once it is planted it has no specific time to harvest or for weeding											
<b>Women's off-farm income</b>													
		Off-farm income activities are spinning and yarn-making and they don't have a specific season; we do them only when we take rest.											

Dinki

Consumption, credit, festivals, fuel and water availability													
		(September)											
		Mesqerem	T'eqemt	Hedar	Tahsas	T'er	Yakatit	Magabit	Miyazya	Genbot	Sane	Nahase	
<b>Consumption</b>													
tef													
sorghum													
maize													
banana													
sugarcane													
onions													
berbere													
Hungry season													
<b>Credit needs (women)</b>													
<b>Festivals</b>													
					Ethiopian christmas	St George anniversary (1 day)			Easter (3 days)				
<b>Fuel availability</b>													
		wood is used the whole year											
<b>Water availability</b>													
											decreases a little		
		Normally we don't have to walk further even if it decreases											



