

## Part II

### THE INVENTORY

#### Introduction

Below is the inventory of the contents of the sample dwelling. It is one of three major inventories which were undertaken in Rangama in which an attempt was made to classify every item according to location in the dwelling, origin, owner/user and use. Nine additional village dwellings were also inventoried for comparative purposes, but records were not kept in the same manner nor at the same level of detail. In those nine cases attention was given to items which could be represented on floor plans of the dwellings in an attempt to create a generalized picture of the contents of the dwellings and their arrangements. These plans as well as similar ones of the dwellings which were exhaustively inventoried appear elsewhere (MacDougall 1971). In addition, as the most expeditious method of gathering a wide range of inventory data for comparative purposes, a complete photographic record was made of the interiors of the nine dwellings. Although some of the entries which would appear in an item-by-item inventory are not revealed by this method of data collection since they are concealed within boxes, baskets, pots and other storage containers, if foodstuffs, books and clothing are excluded, most items in the dwelling are in fact in full or partial view. Thus, a reasonably complete record of dwelling contents can be made for comparative purposes with the aid of the camera, and many of the items not visible can be inferred because of the standardized uses of storage containers and their placement in certain locations. The photographs of the interiors which appear as illustrations are drawn from the record made for this purpose. (See Part IV).

#### The conduct of the inventory

The work on dwelling inventories was begun after we had resided in Rangama for approximately four months. By that time our stated purpose for residing in the village was established as genuine, and the residents had taken a keen interest in the progress of our project. From the outset, much ethnographic information was recorded in graphic form by R. MacDougall who drew sketches of household articles, maps of the settled areas of the village and made measured plans and elevations of temporary structures such as field huts as well as twelve of the forty-five dwellings in Rangama. These activities provided a kind of entertainment which had previously been

unknown in Rangama. They provided a first opportunity for most residents to see their houses and gardens in plan. Thus, the graphic work created a lively interest in at least one aspect of the ethnography, and since it required us to be on location in selected areas of the village for sustained periods of time, it also enabled us to form closer and more informal relationships with a large number of the residents.

The sample dwelling whose contents are described below was selected because it was felt to be representative. The householders were informed of the reasons for singling out their dwelling and the proposed data collection procedures were described to them. They agreed to participate and were most accommodating during the actual data collection. Mr. R.B. Ekanayake, a young schoolteacher who had been born in Rangama and who resided there, assisted in interviewing the occupants on the origin, use and ownership of the domestic articles. He was well liked by most residents and regarded with some affection by WiMo. We feel that his participation in the data collection contributed to the relaxed atmosphere in which it took place and hence to the cooperation we received and to the detailed information we were able to obtain.

The contents of the dwelling were recorded in an ordered fashion location by location and item by item so as to accurately record the arrangements of dwelling contents. Approximately 600 entries appear below. In the course of cross-checking the inventory data with the record of activities presented in Part III, it has become clear that a few items were omitted in the course of the data collection, probably because they were in use when the data on the portion of the dwelling in which they were normally stored was recorded. They include such items as a betel tray, two water buckets, a razor and pumice. Note has been made of them at the conclusion of the inventory. Otherwise we presume the record to be complete.

A comparison of the inventory data with those shown on the plan of the dwelling (Figure 1) reveals some minor differences in dwelling contents and their arrangements. These differences are a consequence of the fact that the plan and the inventory were done several weeks apart, the former in mid-May and the latter in mid-June 1965. There is more paddy stored in the dwelling in June than in May, for example, since the rice harvest had been completed by that time.

The most detailed information possible was sought in each category (origin, owner and use) for each item or substance in the dwelling with certain categorical exceptions (medicines and tools) which are treated below. The category owner/user did not turn out to be a universally useful one, since some dwelling

contents had no single owner or user. This category is therefore not consistently marked. It did help to establish, however, that articles made in one household and usually utilized there were freely exchanged with the other as needed, and it did serve to indicate the ownership of certain property (clothing, for example) when it was considered to be personal. Perhaps the greatest variation in depth of information is to be found in the category 'origin of item'. This category was set up initially in order to distinguish home manufactures from articles purchased in markets. However, we found that the occupants were often able to recall such details as the price paid even though the article had been acquired some time before and the market or market area where the item had been obtained. This information is therefore included for some purchases and naturally not noted for those articles for which it could not be recalled. In this manner we were able to establish that purchases had been made from itinerant traders as well as from a number of distant market areas including Kandy (45 miles), Mahiyangana (40+), Bintenne (40+), Teldeniya (30+), Rangala (22), Dukwariya (22), Hunnasgiriya (22), Udispattuwa (20), Guruwela (17), Kobonella (15), Pallegama (15), Loolwatte (14) and Corbet's Gap (11). Data gathered in this category also revealed that there were a number of gifts from a non-resident son of WiMo and WiFa, suggesting that even though he was employed by the government, he still maintained an interest in a potential inheritance. It also showed that he continued to store many of his personal possessions in the dwelling. There were also a number of "goodwill" gifts from the itinerant traders from whom the occupants purchased cloth and to whom they sold eggs and fowl. It was interesting to note that very few gifts had been exchanged between the occupants. The exceptions were gifts of clothing from Hu to Wi. It was also interesting to see how little personal property or property of any kind Hu had brought from his natal dwelling to his new one, and that practically none of the household articles (with the exception of one bamboo drum) were gifts for the children.

The detail available here on home remedies and pamphlets pertaining to their preparation is not elaborate. Both male householders in the sample dwelling, like many other men in the village, collected and prepared medicines for their own use and the use of their households. WiFa was known in the village as an expert on magical cures and herbal remedies for snakebite and prepared these medicines for others. To this end he had a stock of decoctions and herbs to be made into medicines and a collection of pamphlets and handwritten formulas on curing, some of which were kept within a locked metal box. Our judgment was that a general dwelling inventory was not an appropriate context in which to initiate work on the particulars of Sinhalese medicine, a specialized and to some extent guarded area of knowledge. We observed that raw materials for medicines were generally carefully covered or wrapped and bound in cloths and that written materials were all concealed within closed containers. Our sense of the situation was that these were articles best left as private matters, and thus we made no attempt to untie

